Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

THE SOVIET UNION, WAR AND PEACE

NOVEMBER 1940 SIXPENCE

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A RECORD. We believe we are correct in saying that this is the highest total the Labour Monthly Development Fund has ever reached. We have every hope that it will not only remain at that level, but soar beyond it. Nearly all of the guarantors have paid up like men, and if any do not see their names it is (we hope) because their donations came too late for inclusion. A word as to this. Will all guarantors do their very best to let us have their amounts as early in the month as possible? After all, if you do not manage to collect from quite all your contacts, they can be included in the following month, and we do like to see all the guarantors' names in every month.

More and more soldiers are reading our paper and helping with the Fund. "Red Lance Corporal" of last month has now become "Red N.C.O's" in the plural, and the original guarantor writes: "I induced the soldiers I pass the paper on to, to subscribe also. The result has been a 100 per cent success, as I think you will agree with this present donation of 7*s.* 6*d.*, so we are front of the Soldier Group who are paying double for their paper." What has happened to "Soldier Comrades", by the way?

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STOP PRESS: "Soldier Comrades" have come through with a wonderful encouraging letter and 3*s.* 6*d.* Glad you made it, comrades!

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LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

VOLUME 22 NOVEMBER 1940 NUMBER 11

Editor:
R. PALME DUTT

Contributing Editors:

LOUIS B. BOUDIN (U.S.A.)
GEORGE SELDES (U.S.A.)
STANLEY B. RYERSON (Canada)
GEORGE FINDLAY (South Africa)
GORDON CRANE (Australia)
ANGUS McLAGAN (New Zealand)

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Labour Monthly Discussion Groups

Discussion Groups are now meeting in the following districts. Will interested readers please get in touch with us and we will give them particulars.

LONDON

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Sidcup
Welwyn Garden City
Waltham Cross, Herts
Warrington
Woodford

SPECIAL GROUPS

London Cab Drivers
Medical (now meeting again)
S.E. London Busmen

The Liverpool Left Book Club continues to devote one meeting monthly to a discussion of LABOUR MONTHLY articles. We learn that one London Group meets regularly at 7.0 a.m., after its members have spent the night in the Underground. It is the only time they can spare, and we admire them enormously for their determination not to miss the Group.

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Notes of the Month

The Great Anniversary—War for Empire—The Invasion Question—Words and Deeds—Island and Empire—"Switching" the Propaganda—Labour Imperialists' Dilemma—More and Stronger Dope—Opiates for Mass Discontent—Labour Ministers in the Limelight—That "New World After the War"—The Hangman and the Priest—"Revolutionary" Jingoes—Leaders of Counter-Revolution—Churchill "Hope of the Workers"—From the Old Ragbag of Social Democracy—Parvus, Laski and Bottomley—Lenin's Answer—Working Class Internationalism.

The Workers' and Peasants' Government, created by the revolution of November 6 and 7, and based on the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, proposes to all warring peoples and their Governments to begin immediately negotiations for a just and democratic peace. An overwhelming majority of the exhausted, wearied and war-tortured workers and the labouring classes of all the warring countries are longing for a just and democratic peace. The Government considers it to be a crime against humanity to continue the war for the sake of dividing among the powerful and rich nations the weaker nationalities which were seized by them. Twenty-three years have passed since these words went out in the famous Peace Decree of November 8, 1917, which was the first act of the victorious Russian workers after they had conquered power. In the midst of the present war this call sounds as fresh and close to us as if it were uttered today. It brings the poignant realisation of what might have been, had it been followed and acted on twenty-three years ago. It brings the burning realisation of what can be and must be achieved even now. During all these twenty-three years we have trodden different paths, the people of the other countries and of the Soviet Union—the path of capitalism and the path of socialism. Today the anniversary compels all to face the contrast. At the end of the road, the path of capitalism, after all the promises of a "brave new world after the war" (promises repeated in identical terms with shameless plagiarism by the "socialist" jingoes today), after all the boastings of the superiority of "Western civilisation" and the "English school of socialism", finds us bogged in the morass of the second world war, deeper even than twenty-three years ago. A lost generation—a wasted generation—save for the bitter necessary teaching of experience. Had that call been heard twenty-three years ago, it would be a different world today. We would not be merely celebrating the triumph of socialism in the present Soviet Union. We would be at one with them in acclaiming the triumph of a happy Socialist Europe at peace. This time we must learn the lesson and act on it. A generation of grim experience has taught that there is no other way; that all pretences of a different path are lies and deception; that imperialism means death; that the price of failure is destruction; that there is no escape from endless wars, slavery, suicide, save the struggle of the workers against all imperialism, for their own victory and their own peace. This time we must see that history shall yield a different outcome. In the midst of this bestial and barbaric war the Anniversary of the Russian Socialist Revolution points the one way forward.

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THE war is opening out anew. New theatres of war are opening out beyond Europe. Africa; the Near East; the Middle East; the road to India; the Dutch East Indies. All pretences of the national-defencist character of the war are exploded, no less than the pretences of the war as war for the independence of nations or for democratic freedom. The war is revealed as a war of Empires, for the spoils and domination of the earth, for the conquest of enslaved colonial nations, for "dividing among the powerful and rich nations the weaker nationalities which were seized by them". The myth of the "little island" struggling "alone" against the menace of "invasion" is flung aside with a mocking laugh for the simplicity of those who believed it; the war is revealed as naked, unashamed imperialist war, the preparations for which were being pressed forward in the far corners of the earth even while the invasion talk was being spread to beguile the public and conceal the preparations. "We must cease to think so much of England as a fortress", proclaims the *Evening News* of August 20, "and more of it as a base". "Britain must prepare for action", proclaims the *Daily Herald* of October 7; "our leaders, while not neglecting for a moment the continued defence of this island, must gird themselves for the Battle of Africa and the East." "I think the Battle of Britain will shortly be changed to the Battle of the Middle East", declares Lord Lloyd, on October 20, the old Diehard imperialist pro-consul and now Colonial Minister; "we are almost ready to change from the defensive to the offensive" (exactly the same type of language as preceded the extension of the war in Northern Europe and the ill-fated Norway adventure). And in a further revealing sentence the same Lord Lloyd lets the cat out of the bag that the war is really being fought for the "glittering prizes" of the "colonial Empire":

> The British Colonial Empire was one of the glittering prizes which tempted the gangsters of the Axis, into the gamble of the war.
>
> (Lord Lloyd, broadcast, October 15, 1940)

Germany, Italy and Japan sign their Pact for the "new world order" in Europe and East Asia, and boast that they now assemble two hundred and fifty millions of human beings in their war alliance; while Hitler summons the Governments of Western and Central Europe to form a Continental block. British imperialism, after signing its pact with the United States, summons the Middle Eastern Conference at Delhi and boasts that it is now assembling five hundred millions of human beings in this Empire block, east of Suez. And yet there are still those innocent enough (or hyprocritical enough) to deny the imperialist character of the war.

THE months between May and October were an interlude in the war during which this further extention was being prepared. This interlude was marked by intensive blockade operations on both sides; by protracted, inconclusive air warfare (both sides taking care not to engage their main forces, and emerging with larger air forces than at the beginning); intensive rearmament and massing of forces for the future theatres of war; and feverish diplomatic preparations. During all these months, while a very difficult home situation had to be met and overcome after the disastrous events of the summer, the theme of invasion was worked to death by British official propaganda. This theme is the familiar standby of every ruling class in

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a crisis to rally home opinion to the Government and to acceptance of all reactionary measures in the name of "the nation in danger". Those who lived through the years before 1914 will remember how even then, thirty years ago, the Conservative propaganda machine made its main stock-in-trade the menace of a German invasion, and presented it in countless lurid articles, speeches, books, novels and theatrical performances, in order to press their demands for heavy rearmament and conscription. The same technique has been visible in the exploitation and magnifying of the same theme today. Every time discontent rose high, notably after the first heavy exposure of the cynical class policy of self-protection of the bourgeoisie against air raids and refusal of any serious protection to the masses of the people, Churchill made another speech about invasion. He behaved as if he were all the time expecting it round the corner every week, and as if it were the one preoccupation in his mind. A long series of fictitious dates were planted in Hitler's mouth by British propaganda, and every time they did not come off, a new triumph was proclaimed. It was well known and admitted by experts from the outset that the conditions were not yet present for successful invasion; that the attempt would have been a gift to the British strategists, a gift they would have been delighted to receive (hence their ever more impatient outcry "Why doesn't he come?"); but the by no means incompetent strategists of German imperialism refused to oblige them. The bluff, however, served equally well the purposes of German imperialism, to make a show of ostentatiously advertised preparations, in order to immobilise a certain proportion of British forces by a legitimate strategic feint, while both sides concentrated their main preparations in other directions with less publicity.

For the real situation was markedly different from the propaganda picture presented on both sides. Neither set of rulers could inform their peoples that they must die in order to win for the big banks and trusts spheres of profitable exploitation in distant Asiatic countries. The prosaic reality would have robbed the war of its romance, but their acts were more illuminating than their words. While the Axis radio installations were grinding out their tunes about razing to the ground the island fortress of the British plutocrats, the tyrants of the world, meanwhile their general staffs were concentrating their practical measures in the directions of Northern and Eastern Africa, Syria, Palestine, the Balkans, the Middle East and the route to India. While the British world conquerors of one quarter of the world might be orating to their home public, with the dramatic heroism of a gallant little nation making its last stand for existence, about the "menace of invasion" and the "defence of our island home", they were busily engaged in planning dashing strokes at Dakar on the West African coast, or in dispatching troops and supplies out of the island to Rhodesia, Egypt, the Middle East and India. For the rulers of both sides knew very well that these were the decisive theatres of war. They understood that the conflict of British and German imperialism for the domination and exploitation of the Middle East, which underlay the last war, underlies also this war, which Churchill has called a continuation of the last war. They understood that this was a war, not for national existence, but for colonial exploitation.

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THE British imperialist rulers knew very well that this was not a war for the defence of an island, but for the possession of an Empire. They knew that the control of the island was only one strategic element, and its people a pawn, in this battle for world domination. They knew that the question of invasion of the island was least likely to arise as the first act in this battle, with British sea power, air power and industrial power still intact; and that it could only arise as a practical possibility at a later stage, either after the destruction of British sea power (in practice out of the question, with the complete Anglo-American domination of the seas), or if the capitalist rulers, having sucked the orange dry and completely disorganised its economy, should find it no longer worth defending and find it more advantageous to transfer their Empire base elsewhere. For such an eventuality the Government and upper class had already their preparations complete and ready, to evacuate themselves, their gold, their navy, their shipping, their empire bonds (capital knows no country) to safety overseas, leaving the people to their fate —as indicated in Churchill's June speech and reaffirmed in the reply to the American Government in September. Such schemes, however, are less suitable for general propaganda, since, although masked in the form of the gallant fight in the last Canadian ditch, they reveal too clearly the reality behind the talk of "national defence" by a parasitic imperialist ruling class which means by "national defence" the defence of their world domination and exploitation. Nor does such a stage come in question yet; since, although a considerable degree of transference of industry to Canada has already taken place, the basis of exploitation in the island is still much too profitable to be readily abandoned.

BUT the new theatres of war in Africa and the Middle East are now blazing up. The real character of the war as a war for Empire can no longer be concealed. Hence it becomes necessary to "switch" the propaganda. The people must be made "Empire-minded", "Empire-conscious". The people who have been keyed up for four months to prepare for invasion and to die for their hearths and their homes have now to be informed that they must die for the oilfields of Iran and Iraq, the cotton plantations of Egypt, and the domination of India, for the colonial spoils of their masters, for the "glittering prizes", as the Colonial Minister calls them (temporarily forgetting the well-worn thesis that colonies bring no profit, but are only a philanthropic burden undertaken in trusteeship for civilisation) of the colonial Empire. So the Empire Crusade progaganda is let loose by the Ministry of Information. Mr. Bevin discovers that British imperialism, which holds four hundred and thirty millions under autocratic rule, has been maligned and is really a palladium of liberty: "Whatever may be said about British imperialism in the past no one could deny that in the last fifty years we had been extending liberty to many people" (Bevin at the Trades Union Congress).

BUT this strategically necessary switch-over to the war for Empire creates awkward difficulties for the Liberal-Labour Imperialists, who have been orating about war for democracy against fascism, for the defence of national existence against invasion and foreign conquest (the British Empire is the successful invasion and foreign conquest of hundreds of millions of people), or for the rights and independence of nations. Their occupation is in danger

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of being lost to them. They must either swallow the Tory thesis holus-bolus, the frankly imperialist thesis of war for Empire, for "glittering prizes"; or, admitting their error about the whole character of the war, take up the socialist fight against it; or else discover some marvellous new formula to cover up their continued support of imperialism and imperialist war. Needless to say, the last is the "solution" which appeals to them.

THE more openly reactionary the war becomes, the more it is revealed as a cynical, sordid quarrel of rival exploiters for colonial spoils, with the weapons of wholesale bloodshed, destruction of workers' homes, starvation and disease of millions, the more exalted becomes the propaganda of these Liberal-Labour ideologues about the miraculous secret esoteric meaning of the war and the more glorious and high-sounding its real aims are declared to be. No longer satisfied with the crumbling thesis of the war for democracy against fascism, they now emerge as full-blooded revolutionaries (for every country outside the British Empire). They proclaim that the war is really a "revolution"; it is "a revolutionary war" (*New Statesman and Nation* and *Daily Express*); it is "an international civil war" (Bevin). The war is ending the profit-system; it is ending the division of classes (Chairman's Address to the Trades Union Congress). It is war for "a better world" with an end of "social and political inequality" (Chairwoman's address to the Labour Women's Conference). "Britain and our Allies are fighting to end unemployment and poverty, and will not recognise privilege or place" (Bevin). And so on without limit, according to the fancy of the recipe-maker.

ALL this gibberish is not lunacy, although it might so appear to an ordinary rational man who is accustomed to calling spades spades and not fairy godmothers. Or rather, it is a rational lunacy. For there is no other possible way in which these swindlers can any longer attempt to put over this war as it has now developed. In this second year of war it is no longer as easy to reconcile the masses to the war as in the first. There is criticism, questioning, the beginning of discontent, of active movement. The increasingly open, reactionary imperialist character of the war, the revelation of the war as war for the domination of Egypt, Mesopotamia and India, the endless bleak perspective of the war for years and years combines with increased suffering and hardships of the people, destruction of their homes, class contrasts, profiteering and poverty, food shortage and disease. The air war has brought the horrors of war close to millions of men, women and children; the senseless mutual destruction of workers' homes and its glorification in the newspapers; the cynical egotism of the rich rulers, who have provided at elaborate expense for their own protection, while refusing serious protection for the people; the callous treatment of the victims of air raids, the economic disorganisation and mounting unemployment have aroused the beginnings of mass anger and active struggle. While hundreds of millions of profits are coined from the war by the rich; while the railway companies raise and again raise fares in order to increase their profits many millions of pounds above the pre-war boom level; all the burdens of the war are placed on the shoulders of the people. The Purchase Tax; the taxation of wages; rising prices soaring above the level of wages and allowances; food shortage alongside luxury of the rich; soldiers' wives evicted, driven desperate by their hardships; night clubs

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staging cabarets in bombproof shelters, while the bombs are striking hundreds of workers into corpses to be buried in quicklime, or driving them from their homes with loss of all they had; baton-charges of the people when they protest against the closed shelters; spreading dirt, disease, plague epidemics—these are becoming the realities of the war for the people. Petrograd, 1916. London, 1941. The distance is becoming less great. If an opiate of war-glorification is to be found to drown all this, it must be brewed strong.

THE Government is reconstructed, with Labour Ministers brought to the forefront of public view. While power remains in the hands of the Tory machine, while the imperialist war goes full speed ahead, while the decisive posts of Foreign Affairs, War, Finance, the Colonies, India, the Board of Trade are kept for the present in the hands of tried reactionaries from the circles of the big capitalists, the posts of Labour and Home Security, that is, of regimenting, disciplining and holding the workers submissive to capitalism, are handed to Labour Ministers, whose task is to curb the unrest of the people. The Bevins, Morrisons and Wilkinsons are brought into the limelight; they are presented with every device of publicity to reassure the people, as workers' leaders who can "speak their language", "understand their grievances", and can be trusted to "put things right". A few concessions are handed out. But of course everything goes on as before. The war goes on for the same Empire aims; the profiteering and swindling and business ramps go on: the rich guzzle and the poor go short; the deep shelters are even more sternly refused; the Purchase Tax and the tax deduction from wages are brought into effect after these Ministers have been placed in their present posts. It soon becomes clear to the people that these Ministers are only the allies of the Tories, of the landlords, big bankers and employers; that they are only put there to cover up the rule of big capital; they hand out the soft soap and soothing assurances, while the system goes on. As the discontent grows, the other side of their role comes into view; they are required to show that they can be "strong", maintain "law and order" and apply a little "discipline" to the people. The first baton-charge of the people in East London takes place after Morrison becomes Minister for Home Security. It promises not to be the last. The gulf between the classes cannot be bridged by speeches, nor by prohibition of strikes, nor by Trades Union Congress assurances that the division of classes is ended. Decidedly, a powerful opiate is needed if Labour is to have any hope of holding the ear of the people.

So the glowing, gaudy pictures of the "brave new world after the war" are handed out by the Labour Imperialists, the allies of the Tories, to console the people for their miseries in this world.

> Britain and our Allies are determined to produce a just order in Europe and recreate it on the basis of freedom and free association and equality. We will never tolerate again the masses of unemployed or poverty. We will not recognise privilege or place, but a juster scheme of things is our aims.
>
> (Ernest Bevin, broadcast, October 26, 1940)

> We are fighting this war, not only to destroy a vile thing, but so that on its ruins we may build a better world. . . . This war will have been won by ordinary people.

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. . . Never again must their interests be sacrificed to those of the so-called Governing classes. Social and political inequality must go.
(Chairwoman's Address to the National Labour Women's Conference, October 15, 1940)

None shall make profit out of the war. . . . Old industrial and political antagonisms arising from prejudice and misunderstanding and class hostility have lost their force, if they have not entirely disappeared.
(Chairman's Address, Trades Union Congress, October 7, 1940)

The Prime Minister has declared that we do not covet an inch of anybody's territory. It is a war in defence of the ideals of freedom and comradeship for which our Movements have always stood. . . . We shall have the responsibility now of planning not only a new London, but a new Britain, a new Imperial Commonwealth and a new world. . . . Thus we shall march towards our common goal—the happier, freer and fuller life for which generations have striven.
(George Gibson, Chairman of the Trades Union Congress, *Reynolds News*, October 27, 1940)

And so on without limit. It costs nothing.

DOES the tune sound familiar? Every note of it is repeated from the last war. An ounce of experience is worth a pound of prophecy. Once bit, twice shy. It will not be so easy to deceive the workers twice with the same forged cheques drawn on a glorious resurrection, when the present practice is strengthening capitalist reaction and fixing firmer the chains of slavery. Feuerbach said: "Whoever consoles the slave instead of arousing him to revolt against his slavery aids the slaveholder." Lenin said:

All oppressing classes of every description need two social functions to safeguard their domination: the function of a hangman and the function of a priest. The hangman is to quell the protest and the rebellion of the oppressed, the priest is to paint before them a perspective of mitigated sufferings and sacrifices under the same class rule. . . . Thereby he weans them away from revolutionary actions, undermines their revolutionary spirit, destroys their revolutionary determination.
(Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International.")

CONSCIOUS of the shortcomings of these bland promises of a "new world" to arise from the dungheap of capitalist war and coalition with capitalism, another school of Liberal-Labour ideologues, the skirmishers on the left (the Laskis, Brailsfords, Francis Williams, Bevins, Kingsley Martins, etc.), whose special province is to provide for the considerable body of hesitant, still confused, left opinion of workers already critical of the official policy, liberals distrustful of Diehard reaction and intellectuals influenced by the ideas of socialism and Marxism, seek audaciously to go further and present the same policy of coalition with imperialism and imperialist war in a more sophisticated "revolutionary" and even "Marxist" guise. They admit that the war is an imperialist war, but claim that it is "not merely an imperialist war" (the argument of Laski's "Is This an Imperialist War?"). They claim that it is really a "revolutionary war", even though the Tory rulers are rather dull-witted and slow in understanding it.

From now the war has become plainly a revolutionary struggle.
(H. N. Brailsford, *Reynolds News*, July 7, 1940.)

Either we turn this war into a war of European revolution or we shall be defeated. There is no halfway house. (*New Statesman and Nation*, July 6, 1940.)

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While the war between governments becomes increasingly a monstrous alignment between two great imperial blocs, there is progressively an understanding amongst the more clear-sighted people that its underlying issue is the common man's fight against exploitation. This revolutionary war goes on and must go on.

(*Ibid*, October 12, 1940.)

THE British Tory rulers, the leaders of world counter-revolution for a century and a half, fighting for world domination, fighting to prevent a socialist revolution in Europe, the arch-enemies of socialism, who have chosen for their associates the super-fascist De Gaulle for France, the Rauschnigg-Strasser reactionaries for Germany, the vicious reactionary anti-Soviet General Sikorski for Poland; who have proclaimed through the mouth of a Duff-Cooper, their Propaganda Minister, the aim of a "Revolution of the Right" in Germany; who made war on Hitler, not because he was fascist, not because he was reactionary (all this they applauded and supported), but because he refused to make war on the Soviet Union—are proclaimed now by these pitiful sycophants as leaders of "a European revolution", leaders of "the common man's fight against exploitation". Substitute "leaders of European counter-revolution", who originally built up Hitler's power and now seek to remove him when he no longer serves their aims, but who regard it as their appointed rôle to smash the advance of the European peoples to socialism after they have overthrown the Hitler régime (not thanks to Churchill, but in spite of Churchill; for the rôle of Churchill, the embodiment of Versailles, is the main basis of support for Hitler in Germany) and then the description would be a little more correct. Wendell Willkie, the Republican candidate for the United States Presidency, said in a recent speech that it is necessary to support a victory of British imperialism in order to defeat the danger of a socialist revolution in Europe. The significance of this perfectly plain, shrewd common-sense calculation of a typical representative of American Big Business was lost on these self-infatuated "revolutionary" simpletons, who cannot be satisfied to express their toadying to Tory imperialism without adding a "revolutionary" "Marxist" reason for it.

CAN lickspittle bathos descend further? Yes, it can. The writer in the *New Statesman and Nation* already quoted (12.10.40) admits a "weakness" in the case:

The technique of organising the revolutionary war is by no means obvious at this stage even if our authorities were fully converted to the need of co-operating with people who have no old school ties and who may develop their revolutions on lines which do not square with the ideas of the British ruling class.

But no such difficulties abash the theorist of the Labour Party, Laski. He has complete confidence in the "revolutionary" integrity of the British General Staff and Mr Churchill:

In no quarter is the necessity of a European revolution more fully understood than in the High Command of Great Britain.

(Harold Laski, *Left News*, September, 1940.)

The Churchill Government is "the vital hope of the workers":

The responsibility of the Churchill Government is immense. It is today the vital hope of the workers of the world.

It may secure at this historic moment that transformation of social institutions,

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above all, of economic institutions which makes possible an enduring peace. Men are prepared for great changes. They will respond to new ideas. But the Churchill Government must see to it that the great changes and the new ideas are changes for the common people, ideas for the common people.

(Harold Laski, *Daily Herald* October 21, 1940.)

Great Tsar, good Tsar, hope of the workers, have mercy on the common people and kindly carry out for them the socialist revolution.

THE thesis of "revolutionary war" is also not new, but like every other argument used by the "socialist" jingoes today, comes out of the ragbag of Social Democracy in the last war. The argument of "not purely imperialist war" was used by Kautsky of the war of 1914 (see Lenin's treatment in the "Collapse of the Second International": "There is no 'pure' capitalism in the world, and there can be none", etc.). The German Social Democrats in the last war justified their support of the Kaiser on the grounds that the victory of Russian Tsarism in Europe would mean the destruction of democracy and the working class movement, and that therefore this was really a "revolutionary war" to aid the Russian revolutionary struggle against Tsarism with the assistance of the German General Staff. Similarly the British and French "socialist" supporters of their own imperialists argued that the victory of German Kaiserism and militarism would mean the Prussian jackboot over Europe and the destruction of democracy and the working class movement, and that therefore this was really a "revolutionary war" for the overthrow of Kaiserism.

EVEN Laski's inspiring super-Marxist proclamation that "In no quarter is the necessity of a European revolution more fully understood than in the High Command of Great Britain" was exactly paralleled by the notorious jingo German Social Democrat and speculator, Parvus, in the last war, when he declared in his organ *Die Glocke*:

The German General Staff has taken a stand for a revolution in Russia.

and proclaimed it his "mission" "to serve as an ideological connecting link between the armed German and the revolutionary Russian proletariat". No, Professor Laski, control yourself as you will, there are no new forms of political prostitution. As for "the people's war", that phrase was originally coined to describe the last war by one Horatio Bottomley, a swindler who subsequently served seven years for fraud (though not for that fraud, which won him money and glory during the last war).

AGAINST these deceptions of the British and French "socialist" imperialists Lenin pointed out that if the German Kaiser had never existed, if Germany had been the freest democratic republic, the war would nevertheless have come from the inevitable conflicts of capitalism. And against the German Social Democrats who professed to be aiding the Russian revolutionary struggle against Tsarism by their support of the Kaiser, Lenin replied on behalf of the Russian revolutionary working class, the real leader of the struggle against Tsarism:

If there is anything that can make the struggle of the Russian working class

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against Tsarism more difficult, it is the behaviour of the leaders of German and Austrian Social Democracy.

(Lenin, "The War and Russian Social Democracy.")

The same is true today of the "anti-fascist" arguments for support of British imperialism and its imperialist war aims. If Hitler and German fascism had never existed, if Germany had remained the Weimar democratic republic, this war would still have come from the inevitable conflicts of capitalism, unless the workers had first overthrown capitalism. But the heaviest obstacle in the path of the revolutionary anti-fascist struggle against Hitler in Germany is the British Labour support of Churchill. Churchill means to the German people the incarnation of Versailles, of the last war, of the dismemberment and oppression of Germany, of all they suffered for years at the hands of Anglo-French imperialism. Against this menace masses of the German people see no alternative save to resist, whatever their opposition to Hitler. Thus, the British Labour support for Churchill, so far from serving an anti-fascist aim, rallies support in Germany for Hitler and strengthens Hitler.

No. The revolutionary struggle in this war against Hitler, against Churchill, against all the imperialists, is the struggle of the working people in all countries, the united international struggle, conducted by each people in the first place against their own imperialists. The real struggle against Hitler is voiced in the declaration of the German revolutionary workers, of the German Communist Party, condemning the Dictate of Compiègne:

The German working class is filled with a sense of solidarity with the working class of Britain which is waging a struggle—daily growing in strength—against its own capitalist class for a People's Peace and for the liberation of all oppressed peoples.

In contrast to the chauvinistic leaders of the Second International, who are in the service of British imperialism, the German Communists oppose chauvinism with working class internationalism.

Only the German big capitalists and their lackeys, who enrich themselves by war and the conquest of other countries, whose greed and lust for power are insatiable, want the war to continue. The German people want peace, want to cooperate with all peoples.

The German working class stands for an immediate end to the war, an end to the slaughter and an end to bloodshed, an end to the horrors of destruction, to the terrible sufferings of the millions of toilers, which the greed and lust for power of the ruling cliques impose upon the German people. . . .

For a peace without annexations and indemnities, without the oppression of other nations.

That is the voice of working class internationalism, which will conquer, which can alone end the horrors of war, which can alone bring the "new world after the war"—not by coalition with capitalism and support of imperialist war, but by the irreconcilable struggle of the working people against their capitalist rulers, by the path of that October Revolution whose anniversary we celebrate this month.

R.P.D.

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Twenty-Three Years

BY E. M. WINTERTON

A LIBERAL-LABOUR apologist for the present war recently wrote in the course of his really last and final demolition of the case for Communism:

> Having won the class war, beaten the bourgeoisie to its knees and established the dictatorship of the proletariat, the real task would only then begin. There would immediately be presented the question of how to use victory: what the dictatorship should dictate in problems of money, banking, credit, investment, foreign trade, foreign loans (all very acute problems in Russia today, a quarter of a century after the arrival of Socialism), the management of the Press, the representation of trades or industries, the proper adjustment of conflicting interests between town and country, the maintenance of criminal law, questions of marriage, position of children, bureaucratic abuse, vested interest in red tape, the maintenance of redundant bureaucratic jobs, secret police and its methods, the institution of dossiers, delation, bribery, religion, drink, army discipline. . . . These problems do not solve themselves by the light of socialist nature and Marxist doctrine. . . . The preservation of the attitude and temper of free discussion, so that a governing bureaucracy may develop the right qualities and have dangerous qualities checked will be more, not less important in a Socialist state than in a capitalist one (Sir Norman Angell, *Why Freedom Matters*, pp. 69–70).

Not the least striking proof of the imbecility to which are reduced Liberal-Labour propagandists who try in the name of freedom to justify an imperialist war—a war, among other things, for the maintenance of British rule over 375 million Indians—is the fact that Sir Norman Angell could quite calmly set forth all these problems as though the people of the Soviet Union had not made immense progress in solving them. True, they did not allow the problems to solve themselves, whether by the light of Marxist or any other "doctrine" (it would be too much to expect Angell to understand that Marxism is not a "doctrine" but a guide to action). But Communists never leave any problems to solve themselves—if they are worth the name of Communist.

It would, of course, be naïve to refer a man like Angell to the monumental work of two fellow-members of the Labour Party, in which they have examined precisely the questions which Angell enumerates, and many more, to answer the query whether Soviet Communism is building a new civilisation. It is not the authority of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, or of any other person who has studied the facts, which will have any weight with the kind of intellectual prostitute that habitually brackets the names of Hitler and Stalin, and speaks of "political inquisitions" suppressing the "right to know" with equal ferocity in Communist Russia or Nazi Germany. The mere fact that Angell imagines that problems of foreign trade and foreign loans are "very acute" in the U.S.S.R. today stamps him as an ignoramus, for whom the facts are indeed of secondary consequence when a sixpenny Penguin supporting the war is required.

It would be of considerable interest to take the questions enumerated above, and to see how the coming of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. has changed

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their very nature, thanks to the elimination of capitalism and the liberation of the creative energies of the human race. But it is hardly necessary to use Sir Norman Angell's questionnaire. Although he doubtless is ignorant of the fact, the founders of scientific Socialism more than 90 years ago understood perfectly well that the victory of the working class, the decisive step, must nevertheless open an entirely new period of efforts to achieve the transformation of the whole of society into an association "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

Marx and Engels wrote, in the Communist Manifesto of 1847:

> We have already seen that the first step in the working class revolution is the raising of the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political power to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase as rapidly as possible the total mass of productive forces.
> This naturally cannot be accomplished at first except by despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the bourgeois conditions of production; by measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which in the course of the movement outstrip themselves, and are indispensable as means of revolutionising the whole mode of production.

Marx and Engels then went on to indicate the measures which would be pretty generally applicable for the countries most advanced in their day. It is valuable to see how in the U.S.S.R. the milestones they pointed out have been reached:

"1. *Abolition of property in land and confiscation of ground rents by the State*". The land was nationalised, and land rent abolished, in October 1917, and by the Civil War. This made possible the raising of the economic, social and cultural level of the peasantry, and the narrowing down of class differences up to a point at which a new step forward—the liquidation of the kulaks and the development of nation-wide collective farming in 1929–32—brought the agricultural population for the first time socially abreast of the working class. Thereupon such new questions as social insurance for the countryside and the provision of universal secondary education for the first time became practical propositions.

"2. *A heavily progressive income tax*". This has proved a potent weapon in the hands of the proletarian State for combating those fragments of the capitalist class who still remained after the basis of their economic power had been destroyed.

"3. *Abolition of inheritance*". In its essential elements— the abolition of the right to inherit landed property, mineral wealth or shares in a factory, bank or railway—this has been achieved. As a consequence, the Socialist community does not fear to pay its outstanding members, doing work of supreme national importance—such as artists and playwrights, great engineers and great workmen—rewards commensurate with their contribution to the national life. Thereby they do not require even for themselves, let alone for their dependants, the right to live unproductively for the future at society's expense. But every person may inherit the personal property, whether in cash or effects, of their friends or relations.

"4. *Confiscation of the property of emigrants and rebels*". This was carried out thoroughly enough. Had the Spanish Republic done the same, it might

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have been alive today; but then it was not led by the proletariat. And when we cast off all the false plumage of devotion to liberty with which the reactionaries in this country deck themselves, we may readily perceive that it is the loss of the immense investments of British finance capital in Russian Tsardom —including the shares speculatively bought up from the Russian rebels— which is at the bottom of much anti-Soviet propaganda today. That is the price which the proletariat has to pay for consolidating its hold on all the instruments of production.

"5. *Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly*". So effectively was this carried out, that the proletarian State was able to use the machinery of banking, of credit and of investment of State resources on a scale never dreamt of by any capitalist State (save for purposes of destruction). The whole of the period of Five Year Plans which began in 1929 reposes upon this masterly adaptation to Socialist uses of the machinery for registering the means of production, the requirements of consumption and the labour power available—just as Lenin, continuing the work of Marx and Engels, had foreshadowed that it would be, in his book on "Imperialism, the Last Stage of Capitalism" (1916).

"6. *Centralisation of the means of transport in the hands of the State*". This has rendered possible the opening up of hitherto untapped sources of wealth, by pushing out the network of railways, roads and canals in which the Soviet Union is still poor, bearing in mind its huge area and requirements, but which nevertheless is far greater than in Tsarist days. In one sphere of transport—the air—the U.S.S.R. was able to start almost level with the other large States. The concentration of all resources in the hands of the proletarian State made it possible as a result for the U.S.S.R. rapidly to reach a commanding position. By 1935, the latest year for which the League of Nations Year Book shows comparative figures, the Soviet Union was first in Europe and Asia in respect of ton-kilometres carried on its air lines, if not first in the world. This in its turn placed the Soviet Union in the very first rank of air strength for national defence.

"7. *Extension of national factories and instruments of production, cultivation and improvement of waste lands in accordance with a general social plan.*" Is it necessary to underline the immense and peerless achievement of the Soviet Union under this head? Sufficient, perhaps, to point out (*i*) that the Five Year Plan is just what Marx and Engels called it—a "social plan"— providing for the interests of society as a whole, not one of the fake "plans" of a Goering or a Roosevelt, aimed at perpetuating capitalist exploitation in the circumstances particularly suited to the capitalist State concerned; (*ii*) that the extension of production has been at an increasing tempo indicated by the indices published by the League of Nations itself—from 100, as the level of 1929, to 198 in 1933 and 470 in 1938; (*iii*) that in no country has there been such a rapid extension and improvement of agricultural production, thanks to the tremendous organising and educative functions of the collective farms in which the overwhelming majority (94%) of the Soviet peasantry are now gathered.

"8. *Obligation of all to labour; organisation of industrial armies, especially for agriculture*". Labour in the Soviet Union is now not only the obligation of all, but the opportunity of all. There is no unemployment, there is no

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inequality of sex or nationality in access to any occupation, the obligations of the worker are under his or her collective control through works, shop or office committees. The industrial armies which were organised for a moment at the end of the Civil War, to do the simplest agricultural and transport work, have long since "outstripped themselves in the course of the movement", being replaced by a new higher form of industrial army—the army of volunteer Socialist competition, the millions upon millions of Stakhanovites who have mastered the technique of their job whether in industry, agriculture, the professions, arts or sciences. And still today the enthusiasm with which the whole country builds itself a better life is rooted in the common obligation of all to labour.

"9. *Combination of agricultural and industrial labour, in order to remove the distinction between town and country*". In this sphere there is still a great deal to be done: but the decisive step has been taken. The collectivisation of agriculture has meant that the vast majority of the people—workers on the land—have taken their own road to Socialism, leading to the same goal as the road of State enterprise followed by the town workers. The ever increasing mechanisation of Soviet agriculture has created both the material and the mental conditions which bring the country dweller into closer unity with the town-dweller. Striking evidence of this is the vast growth in the countryside of institutions hitherto the specific feature of towns—secondary schools, laboratories, local power stations and repair shops, children's clinics, maternity homes, theatres, operatic companies, concert halls.

"10. *Free public education for all children. Abolition of factory labour for children in its present form. Combination of education with material production, etc.*" This aim has been made a reality in the Soviet Union. True there are still inequalities caused by material difficulties—the people of the former colonies have not yet in fact caught up completely with the Russians, but in return they are advancing at a more rapid speed to full secondary education for all. Again, whereas secondary education is already general in the towns, is is not yet general in the countryside, owing to lack of buildings and teachers for such a great enterprise. But it is no chance that precisely this year of war in the capitalist world should see the Soviet Union adopting extraordinary means to hasten the process of educational development, by ensuring the industrial and continued education of a million young people between 14 and 17 years of age every year—young people who of necessity must in the main come from the countryside. And, after many experiments, and retaining the full safeguard for children against such monstrous systems of exploitation as prevail in the most "advanced" capitalist countries, not to speak of India and Africa, we see a big move in the direction of "combination of education with material production", for which the best educational thought has always striven.

Thus it may truly be said that Marxism embodied in the Soviet Union—the interest on Marx's Capital, as the joke of post-revolutionary years had it—has not only "won the class war" against the bourgeoisie in the flesh. It has won the new kind of class war which began at that very moment, and which consisted in proving that a new society could be built which treated man as a human being and not as a source of profits.

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It has had the worst of possible worlds in which to do this, but under the leadership of the Bolsheviks it has succeeded.

Against this picture 23 years after the revolution, what have the capitalist statesmen to offer? Nothing but imperialist war, colonial exploitation, pipe-dreams of a new world in exchange for bloodshed and sacrifice today, with Defence Regulations settling the exploiters more firmly in the saddle than ever (just as in 1914–1918). In one camp the savagery of Nazi and fascist exploitation, on the other side the savagery of Sahib and Wall Street exploitation—fallen out just now, but capable at any moment of uniting their forces against the best of the human race, as the world saw in Spain between 1936 and 1938, as the world has seen in China from 1937 until the present moment.

It is the consciousness of this contrast, no doubt, that has procured lately such a flood of malevolent and obscuranist slander against the Soviet Union, aimed specifically at creating the impression that its achievements have been won at the price of lost or renounced liberty. Sir Norman Angell's book has already been mentioned: the 900,000 copies in which Mr Hilaire Belloc's ignorant tirade against the Soviet Union were circulated by *Picture Post* serve the same purpose. Listen to this flowering of the "Liberal" Roman Catholic intellect:

> The main Nazi contention . . . is exactly the same as the main Communist contention. It runs thus: the common man desires nothing but the satisfaction of his material needs. Make a man certain of sufficient food and sufficient warmth and shelter, and he will not trouble much about the rest (Mr. Belloc, October 19, 1940).

It is bad enough that the apologist of an Empire in which four-fifths of the inhabitants are treated by their rulers precisely on that basis (although the food, warmth and shelter are not even sufficient) should not have the wit to keep his mouth shut. But it surely outruns the tolerated limits of arrogance of even a Roman Catholic historian to attribute this gross ideal of his late friends the Nazis to his enemies the Communists. The Communists have always demanded the abolition "of the power to subjugate the labour of others" as a step to the abolition of private property in culture and the fruits of the human intellect. They have proved in the Soviet Union that their demand was not a phrase, but a programme to be applied in real life.

As for liberty, "the right to know", free discussion, and so on: when the British working-man in deed and not in word has the same rights of discussion and influence upon public policy as the Soviet working man (through trade union and shop committee, through direct delegation of power and public control machinery), and when Indians and Africans enjoy the same rights, civil and political, as British—then will be the time for the Bellocs and Angells, in whose eyes the British middle class ranks as the entire 500 millions of the Empire, to challenge the U.S.S.R.

But Mr. Belloc's and Sir Norman Angell's efforts will not be any more successful than those of their countless predecessors at any time during these twenty-three historic years. The peoples of the British Empire have been plunged by their imperialist masters into the terrible school of war, and they are learning its lessons inexorably. The lesson of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will not be lost upon them.

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The Imperialist Struggle for a New Redivision of the World

BY E. VARGA

NEVER HAS human history been so rich in events, nor the succession of social formations so rapid as in the last century. This will be clear if we picture the world as it was a hundred years ago.

In 1840, the capitalist mode of production was already in the main the dominant one in the majority of the countries of the world. But the capitalist system had reached its highest development in several of the countries of Western Europe and in the United States of America; only in these countries had the bourgeoisie won political power and established a political régime answering to the interests of the capitalist mode of production.

Germany was still split up into thirty-six States, each with strong survivals of feudalism, its own currency and customs duties and its own laws. In the 1867 preface to *Capital*, Marx said of continental Europe, contrasting it to England, as follows:

". . . We, like all the rest of Continental Western Europe, suffer not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead. *Le mort saisit le vif!*"

The Hapsburg monarchy on the Danube was a feudal absolutism in every respect. Italy was partly split up into a multiplicity of tiny States, and was partly under the foreign yoke of the Hapsburgs. In Russia, serfdom and the tsarist autocracy continued in full sway. In Turkey, which at that time embraced all Asia Minor, Northern Africa and the Balkans, a feudal system prevailed, headed by a military-clerical chief in the person of the Sultan. Japan, which was still completely cut off from the outer world, was partly under the sway of a pre-feudal system. As to Asia, with the exception of India and Africa, only its outskirts had been opened up by the capitalist powers of Europe.

Capitalist technique was still very primitive seen through the eyes of to-day. Textiles were the predominating branch of capitalist industry. In all Europe there were only 3,000 kilometres of railways, while in Asia and Africa there were no railways at all. Electricity, gas, automobiles and the chemical industry was still unknown.

But those were times of unhampered technical development of technology, of free competition and falling prices. Marx and Engels wrote in 1848, in the Communist Manifesto, that "the cheap prices of its (the bourgeoisie's

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—E.V.) commodities, are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate."

The cyclical movement of capitalist reproduction and the periodical crises of over-production had already begun in Western Europe. But the rapid expansion of the capitalist market as the result of the conversion of the peasants, who had hitherto maintained a self-sufficing economy, into purchasers and producers of commodities facilitated and expedited the passing of the crises.

It was a time when capitalism still signified progress and the rapid development of productive forces. It may still have seemed to the bourgeoisie that its special class interests coincided with the interests of society in general. Hymns of praise were sung to capitalism.

But amidst the chorus of eulogisers of capitalism, discordant notes, the warning voices of accusers and doubters, like Sismondi and the Utopians, could already be detected. In England the mass movement of the Chartists had already arisen, and was criticising the capitalist evil. But the man who was destined to discover the inherent laws of the capitalist mode of production and its historically transitional character—Karl Marx—was then, in 1840, still a student at the Berlin University.

It was a time when England was undisputably the leading capitalist country, the "workshop of the world", the mistress of the seas, a country which fought for its interests by the hand of foreign mercenaries, by the hand of other nations. England's hegemony had already lasted for about half a century.

This was the "comparatively peaceful" era of capitalism, as Lenin called it. Since the struggle for markets was chiefly waged by means of cheap prices, it was enough for British capital to open new trading ports in other countries. There was no need for it to conquer these countries outright. Even as late as 1852 Disraeli, the British Conservative Prime Minister, declared: "The colonies are millstones around our necks." (See Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VI.).

* * * * * *

But sixty years later, in 1900, the world presented an entirely different picture. The capitalist mode of production had brought the whole world under its sway. At the same time, the character of capitalism itself had changed. By virtue of its inherent laws of development, capitalism of the period of free competition had been converted into monopoly capitalism, imperialism. The transition to imperialism had been attended by profound changes, with which the reader will be familiar from Lenin's brilliant work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. We shall only dwell on the factors which have a direct bearing on the wars for the redivision of the world.

Combined in monopolies, finance capital seeks to secure maximum profits not so much by increasing the sale of commodities at low prices, as was the case in the period of free competition, as by high monopoly prices. This is attainable only by the artificial restriction of supply, by the elimination of free competition. For this purpose, associations of employers are first of all formed in the various branches of production in each country; after this, foreign competition is eliminated, or at least weakened, by the

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introduction of protective tariffs; the "home market" is protected so as to allow only home monopoly capital access to it. In some cases the monopolistic combines of the stronger imperialist powers share up the world's markets and form international cartels.

But owing to high monopoly prices, the capacity of the home market is insufficient for capital, which accordingly experiences a need for foreign markets. And as the finance capital of all imperialist countries is striving for the same end, competition, ousted from the home market, is resumed in the foreign market and in an even more acute form, the form of dumping, that is, the sale of commodities abroad at below the cost of production, and sometimes even below self-cost. Only a monopoly of foreign markets makes it possible to sell goods abroad, too, at high monopoly prices. Consequently, monopoly capital, unlike the capital of the time of free competition, strives to bring foreign countries *under its political sway*, to transform them into colonies, to redivide the world among the imperialist powers in order to safeguard their monopoly in the markets.

There is one other reason that induces monopoly capital to subjugate other countries.

The high super-profits accumulate in the hands of the monopolistic combines in the form of money. This newly accumulated capital cannot find a fruitful field of investment in one or another branch of production in the home country, for if it did the production and supply of goods would exceed the capacity of the market (in view of the high prices imposed by the monopolies), which would lead to a fall in prices. Hence the tendency to export capital to countries capitalistically still undeveloped, where "profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap" (*Ibid*, Chapter VI).

But in order profitably to invest its capital in a foreign, backward country and to compel the native population to work as wage labourers, the financial oligarchy needs a guarantee of the security of its property and the right to dispose of the labour power of the natives. That is achieved best of all by conquering and enslaving the backward country, by converting it into a colony. And so, the export of capital is a stimulus to the imperialist policy of conquest.

An industrial monopoly is best guaranteed against the appearance of new competitors when the sources of raw material required for the production of its goods are its own exclusive property. Hence the hunt for sources of raw material all over the world, often enough not so much for the exploitation of these sources as to prevent them falling into the hands of competitors, present or future.

How is the monopoly of sources of raw material to be secured? The best way is for the imperialist power concerned to seize the country in which these sources lie and convert it into its own colony or semi-colony. The hunt for sources of raw material is therefore another stimulus to the imperialist policy of conquest.

But as the financial oligarchies in all imperialist countries pursue a similar policy of conquest, wars among the imperialist marauders for periodical redivisions of the world are inevitable.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, parallel with the transition to monopoly capitalism, another highly important change was in

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progress among the imperialist countries: as a result of the law of unevenness of capitalist development, Great Britain was overtaken by two of her competitors—Germany and the United States of America—who ousted her from her monopoly position as the "workshop of the world". Here are a few figures in illustration:

	Production			
	Coal (*millions of tons*)	*Iron*	*Steel* (*thousands of tons*)	*Cotton* (*consumption*)
1850				
Great Britain	49·0	3,200	—	640
U.S.A.	6·3	564	—	—
Germany	5·2	208	6	18
1870				
Great Britain	110·0	6,000	200	1,100
U.S.A.	29·5	1,665	69	263†
Germany	26·4	1,391	170	81
1900				
Great Britain	225	9,000	4,900	1,540
U.S.A.	241	13,789	10,188	875
Germany	109	8,521	6,646	307
1913				
Great Britain	287	10,300	7,700	1,920
U.S.A.	509	31,900	31,301	1,307
Germany	190*	19,300	18,329	486

(*World Economic Crises*, Vol. I. Institute of World Economy and World Politics of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., 1937.)

As we see, Great Britain which, in 1870 still far surpassed her competitors in all the more important branches of production, by the end of the nineteenth century had been overtaken and outstripped by her competitors—Germany and the United States—in all branches except the textile industry, whose importance had relatively diminished compared with heavy industry. This particularly applies to the highly important "new" branches of industry, of which figures are not available for purposes of comparison. But it may be safely said that Germany had surpassed Great Britain in every branch of the chemical industry, and that the United States as well as Germany had surpassed her in the machine-building industry. There can be no doubt that on the eve of the first world imperialist war both German and American capitalism, if we take only their power at home, were much stronger than British capitalism.

But the possession of colonies did not keep pace with the development of the internal strength of the leading capitalist powers. Significant in this respect are the figures cited by Lenin in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VI.

* Plus 87,000,000 tons of brown coal.

† Figures for 1871.

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COLONIAL POSSESSIONS OF THE IMPERIALIST POWERS ON THE EVE OF THE WORLD WAR OF 1914

	Great Britain	*France*	*Germany*	*Russia*	*U.S.A.*	*Japan*
Territory (millions of sq. kilometres)	33·5	10·6	2·9	17·4	0·3	0·3
Population (millions)	393·5	55·5	12·3	33·2	9·7	19·2

The size of the population of the colonies is, of course, economically more important than their territory, which may, as was the case with Germany's African colonies, consist chiefly of sterile deserts. We find that the population of the colonies exploited by British imperialism was three times as large as the population of all the colonies of the other five Great Powers together!

In particular, the colonial possessions of Germany and the U.S.A., which had economically outstripped Great Britain in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, did not at all correspond to the economic, military and political might of these two powers.

Actually, British capital occupied an even more privileged position. In addition to its own colonies, it intensively exploited those belonging to the small states, especially the Portuguese colonies in Africa and the Dutch colonies in Asia. In the "semi-colonies" (China, Turkey, Persia) whose population Lenin estimates at 361,200,000, as well as in a number of the South American "dependant" countries like the Argentine and Uruguay, Great Britain had vast capital investments and powerful economic and political interests. According to the laws of imperialism, such a state of affairs was bound to raise the problem of a forcible redivision of the world.

At that period American finance capital was by no means as interested in a redivision of the world as German finance capital. The vast territory of the U.S.A. abounded in sources of raw material of all kinds: coal, oil, ore, cotton, etc. Part of the arable area was still uncultivated. Neither was there any particular urge to export capital, as it could be quite profitably invested at home. Consequently, there was no "superfluous" capital in the United States; on the contrary, right up to the first world war America imported capital, and at the time of the outbreak of the war owed some $7,000 million to other countries, including $4,000 million to Great Britain.*

What American monopoly capital needed most of all was additional sources of cheap labour power. These it acquired not in the way the imperialist states of Europe did—by exporting capital to colonial countries where labour was cheap—but by importing millions of immigrant workers from all parts of the world. This influx of immigrants, or new consumers of goods, made possible the constant and extensive enlargement of the home market. Hence the export of goods was not as important for the U.S.A. as for the European countries. The United States exported less than 10 per cent of its output, whereas Great Britain, France and Germany exported approximately 23 or 25 per cent.

Quite different was the position of German monopoly capital. Germans had no sources of the highly important raw materials, such as oil, non-ferrous metals, textile staples and fats, on her own territory; she also lacked foodstuffs. In order to import all these Germany had to export large quantities of

* Cleona Lewis, *America's Stake in International Investments*, Washington, 1938.

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her industrial manufactures, and this brought her into conflict with the colonial monopoly of the imperialist powers, especially of Great Britain.

The apologists of British imperialism, of course, never tired of asserting that in accordance with the "most favoured nation" principle the British colonies were opened to the trade and the capital of all countries on an equal footing with those of Great Britain. Formally speaking, this was correct, but actually it was far from the case. The building of railways and ports, electrification, the supply of rolling stock and the exploitation of sources of raw material in the British world empire were virtually a monopoly of British capital. Unless he has the "protection" of the authorities, no capitalist can secure in the colonies the labour power he needs. British capital likewise controlled the shipping, the banks and the credit system of the colonies. It was very hard for "foreign" capital to find any profitable field of investment in the British or French colonies.

Quite different was the case in the colonial possessions of states which were poor in capital. While Tsarist Russia was engaged in colonial conquest in Manchuria and Central Asia, the raw material resources of the Ukraine and of Baku were being intensively exploited by British, French and Belgian capital. Russia had become entangled in debt to the Western Powers and was dependent on them.

The English have always been fond of asserting that the Germans may acquire in the market the raw materials secured in the British Colonies on the same terms as British merchants. The British imperialists pretend to be oblivious of the fact that even so the colonial super-profits derived from the production of raw materials remain in the pockets of the British colonial capitalists.

The contradictions between the economic might of German monopoly capitalism (which in 1913 had undoubtedly far outstripped Great Britain), and the fact that the colonial population under its sway amounted to only 3 per cent of the population of the British colonies must be borne in mind when elucidating the causes that gave rise to the first World Imperialist War. Great Britain's reply to Germany's attempt to create her own colonial empire in Asia Minor (nominally under the rule of Turkey)* by building a railway from Berlin to Baghdad was to *encircle* Germany. Great Britain concluded military treaties with France, Japan and, in 1907, with Russia, with which she had never found herself in the same camp ever since the Napoleonic wars. (Tsarist Russia felt that Germany's advance was a menace to her colonies in Central Asia and to her claims to Constantinople.)

British diplomatic intrigues had prepared the way for Italy's desertion of Germany by Italy, and for the adhesion of the United States to the British bloc. The first World Imperialist War was essentially a war between Germany and Great Britain for colonial possessions. As Lenin said, the problem of colonial possession was decided on the battlefields of Europe.

The issue of the war was not in Germany's favour. Under the Versailles Peace she lost even those not very valuable colonies which she had possessed

* That German finance capital chose this particular territory for the foundation of a colonial empire was not fortuitous. Whereas Germany possessed a more powerful army, England enjoyed superiority on the high seas. Colonial seizures in overseas countries would have met with the resistance of the British Navy, whereas Asia Minor could be reached by internal waterways led through Austria-Hungary and the Balkans.

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before the war; large pieces were cut off from her European territory, and a huge burden of reparations was imposed on her. All this was done with the object of preventing German capitalism from ever recovering and becoming a competitor of equal strength to Britain. Turkey was deprived of all her regions that had a non-Turkish population. Great Britain rounded out her colonial empire in Africa, obtained a straight road from Cape Town to Cairo, and established new lines of communication with India through Arabia and Irak. Such a division of the world was even more advantageous to Britain and France than the one that had existed before the World War. Italy was left out in the cold.

The nations under the colonial yoke of Tsardom were liberated by the Great October Socialist Revolution. Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, with the aid of the Soviet Union, largely or entirely shook off their dependence on imperialism.

As a result of the first imperialist world war and the changes that had directly sprung from it, the relation of forces by the time of the outbreak of the second imperialist war was as follows:

COLONIAL POSSESSIONS OF THE GREAT POWERS
(*Millions of sq. kgms. and millions of inhabitants*)

	Colonies		*Home Countries* 1932		*Total*	
	Area	*Pop.*	*Area*	*Pop.*	*Area*	*Pop.*
Great Britain	34·9	466·5	0·25	46·2	35·1	512·7
France	11·9	65·1	0·55	42·0	12·45	107·1
Germany	—	—	0·47	64·8	0·47	64·8
U.S.A.	0·3	14·6	9·4	124·6	9·8	139·2
Japan (without newly conquered provinces of China)	0·3	28·0	0·4	65·5	0·7	93·5
Total—five Great Powers	47·4	574·2	11·07	343·1	58·42	917·3
Colonies of other Powers (Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Norway and Portugal)	9·6	87·6	—	—	9·6	87·6
Semi-colonies and dependent countries (Arabia, Butan, Nepal, Sien, Central and South American countries, Abyssinia and Liberia)	—	—	—	—	34·9	150·0
Countries fully or mainly liberated from imperialist dependence (China, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan)	—	—	—	—	3·0	480·7
Other countries (capitalist)	—	—	—	—	3·98	224·1
U.S.S.R.	—	—	—	—	21·2	163·2
Mongolia and Tuva People's Republic	—	—	—	—	1·4	1·6
The World	—	—	—	—	132·5	2.024·5

This table shows that Great Britain's superiority in the colonial world had become even greater than before the first World War. Great Britain had

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over 466 million colonial people under her sway (a small part of this number —the inhabitants of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and part of South Africa, a total of about 20 million—are English; they are not colonial people in the true sense of the word, but they are in a state of economic and financial dependence on England), while France, the U.S.A. and Japan together had only 108 million. Until she conquered Abyssinia, Italy's colonies were only of slight value; Germany had no colonies at all.

* * * * * *

Since the first World War, the importance of colonies to the monopoly capital of the imperialist powers has increased. The general crisis of capitalism which was still in an embryonic state before the World War, has now developed to the full. In all capitalist countries, the contradiction between the tendency of capital to extend production, on the one hand, and the relative restriction of the markets, on the other, has grown more acute. Hence the chronic idleness of a large share of production capital, chronic mass unemployment and a chronic redundancy of loan capital.

The finance capital of the imperialist powers is seeking a way out of the situation by strengthening its monopoly in its colonial markets, which is clearly shown by the following figures, borrowed from G. Clark's *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism** This tendency has markedly developed in the past six years.

GREAT BRITAIN'S TRADE WITH HER COLONIAL EMPIRE
(*percentage of total trade*)

	1904–13	1919–28	1929–34
Import	25·7	33·0	32·9
Export	34·8	40·5	44·6

FRANCE'S TRADE WITH HER COLONIAL EMPIRE
(*percentage of total trade*)

	1904–13	1919–28	1929–34
Import	10·6	10·8	16·4
Export	12·6	14·9	24·1

These figures quite clearly reveal the rapidly increasing importance to these countries of their own colonies as markets, and show why wars for colonies, for a new redivision of the world are inevitable in the era of imperialism in general, and in the period of the general crisis of capitalism in particular.

This increase in trade with the colonies was achieved by the abandonment of the "most favoured nation" principle and the introduction of tariffs for the protection of English goods in the colonies and of colonial goods in England. Trade between the component parts of the British Empire had likewise increased.

The most complete monopoly is that of Japan in the Korean market. In 1936, of Korea's total imports amounting to 762 million yen, 717 million yen came from Japan and Manchuria, and of total exports amounting to 593 million yen, goods to the value of 518 million yen were exported to Japan and of 56 million yen to Manchuria.† An almost one hundred per cent monopoly.

* G. Clark, *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism*, New York, 1936.

† Hubners *Weltstatistik*, 1939.

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We find the contradiction between the economic might of the monopoly capital of Germany and of Great Britain, on the one hand, and their colonial possessions, on the other—which was one of the chief causes of the first World War—reproduced in a far more acute degree two decades later. The plan of the British and French finance oligarchy to hold their dangerous competitor—German finance capital—in a state of permanent economic suppression suffered a fiasco. It did so owing to the inherent laws of the capitalist mode of production, owing to the rivalry between Great Britain and France and the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States.

Notwithstanding the predatory Versailles Peace imposed on Germany, notwithstanding the heavy burden of reparations, German capitalism entered on a new phase of progress, partly with the help of American and British loan capital. By 1938, German capitalism had again taken first place among the capitalist countries of Europe, which is incontrovertibly proved by the following figures quoted in the *League of Nations Year Book* for 1938–39:

		Output in 1938		
		Germany	*Great Britain*	*France*
Coal	(millions of tons)	186	232	47
Brown coal	(„ „ „)	195	—	—
Iron	(„ „ „)	18·6	6·9	6·0
Steel	(„ „ „)	23·2	10·6	6·2
Aluminium	(thousands of tons)	160	23	45
Electricity	(billions of kilowatts)	55	25	19

These figures show that Germany has again considerably outstripped her European rivals economically. As is inevitable under capitalism economic development was accompanied by growing military power. The measures that had been taken to limit German armaments ceased to be effective and by 1939 Germany again possessed a powerful army and a stronger air force than any capitalist country in the world. Between the economic and military might of German capitalism, on the one hand, and its total lack of colonial possessions on the other, there was a similar if not more acute contradiction than in 1914. German monopoly capital began to demand an appropriate share in the exploitation of colonies. As in 1914, the reply of the British bourgeoisie was a new attempt to encircle Germany.

The importance of colonies as sources of raw material has grown considerably since the first World War. The British Empire's monopoly of certain raw materials, such as nickel, tin and rubber (the monopoly of rubber is shared by Great Britain and Holland) has become the source of vast superprofits. With the progress of technology such rare metals as manganese, chromium and molybdenum have become indispensable to modern metallurgy.

How true to-day is what Lenin wrote twenty-four years ago!

"... Monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are controlled by the one group. And we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them; for example, by buying up mineral lands, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of a struggle with competitors, including the risk that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a State monopoly.

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The more capitalism is developed, the more the need for raw materials is felt, the more bitter competition becomes, and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds throughout the whole world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies." (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.* Chapter VI.)

Alongside of the economic importance of the colonial sources of raw material, their strategic importance is now greater than ever before. Oil, iron ore, non-ferrous metals, rare metals, rubber and many other kinds of raw material are indispensable for the conduct of modern warfare.

The bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries which lacked colonies suffered politically as well as economically. With the development of the general crisis of capitalism, the growing acuteness of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the formation of strong Communist parties in the capitalist countries, and the stimulus furnished to the revolutionary working class movement all over the world by the progress of socialist construction in the U.S.S.R., it has become more important than ever to the bourgeoisie to have a buttress within the working class in the shape of a bribed labour aristocracy. Only when this social basis of opportunism in the working-class movement existed could Social-Democracy play its traditional role as the main social buttress of the bourgeoisie. But to maintain a labour aristocracy, colonial super-profits, foreign capital investments and the brutal exploitation of defenceless colonial peoples were required.

The possession or lack of colonies explains the difference in the position of the Social-Democratic parties in the various capitalist countries to-day. Two sharply-defined groups of countries have arisen in the past ten years. The first group consists of the "rich" countries, the countries with extensive colonial possessions and huge capital investments abroad and with a corrupt labour aristocracy at home: Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries (the latter do not possess large colonies and, with the exception of Sweden, have no foreign capital investments, but they are to a large extent appendages and satellites of the British Empire). In all the countries of this group, the Social-Democrats are a legal mass party, are represented in the bourgeois coalition governments and continue to be the main social buttress of the bourgeoisie. But Social-Democracy is encountering the growing resistance of the working class, a result of the activities of the Communist parties.

The second group consists of the "poor" countries, countries with no foreign investments and with no, or only very small, colonial possessions: Germany, Italy, Spain, etc. The bourgeoisie of these countries is not in a position to maintain a labour aristocracy large enough to guarantee success to the activities of Social-Democratic parties in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, the bourgeoisie of these countries has entirely dispensed with the services of the Social Democratic parties, has driven them underground and has attempted to transfer to other parties the function of main social buttress of the bourgeoisie hitherto performed by the Social-Democratic parties.

Colonies are not only of economic and political, but also of strategical value. To-day more than ever before, every newly conquered region serves as a strategical base for further conquest. Any rocky island, however sterile and deserted, is of the utmost value if it helps to strengthen the strategical

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position of some imperialist country; territory is important in itself, irrespective of its economic value. Hence the increased tendency on the part of the imperialists to seize any area they can, if only to prevent it becoming a military base for others. Economic, political and strategical factors in conjunction render a struggle for a new redivision of the world inevitable in the period of the general crisis of capitalism.

The present war is an imperialist war for the redivision of the world. And what Lenin said of the World War of 1914 likewise applies to the present war. The way for this war was similarly paved by *all* the imperialist countries. The financial oligarchies of all the imperialist countries bear an equal responsibility for it.

Lenin wrote in 1916, and repeated the idea several times before the October Revolution, that the proletarian revolution would break out "in connection with war".* At that time it never occurred to the ruling classes that their rule was in any way endangered. But they know it to-day, and are afraid of it. The example of the Soviet Union is a warning to them. Nevertheless, the inherent laws of capitalism drive them to launch again into a struggle for a redivision of the world. The power of the Soviet Union, the strength of the Red Army, their fear of the working masses in their own country, and Stalin's wise peace policy all helped to frustrate the Munich policy of a united front of the imperialist powers against the Soviet Union. The antagonisms among the imperialist powers over the division of the world have *temporarily* proved to be stronger than the fundamental antagonism between capitalism and socialism.

The war between the imperialist states is undoubtedly weakening the entire capitalist system. The superiority of socialism stands out all the more clearly and distinctly. The conditions for successful proletarian revolutions are ripening in a number of other countries, and so are the conditions for successful anti-imperialist revolutions in the oppressed colonial and semi-colonial countries.

* "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International", *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

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The Trade Unions: What Now?

BY PETER KERRIGAN

THE 1940 Trades Union Congress coincided with a further intensification of the war and the placing of increased burdens on the workers. Large scale aerial attacks on London and other places in Britain were being met with counter bombing by the R.A.F. against German and French towns. Operations in Egypt and the near East opened up at the same time as Germany proceeded to further action in the Balkans.

The new German-Italian-Japanese agreement and the counter measures by Britain and America were accompanied by more sinkings at sea and increased blockade efforts on both sides.

For the workers really appalling suffering in London and other towns as a result of large scale bombings. New attacks preparing on wages as the cost of living continued to soar and essential commodities were reduced. The Purchase Tax was only a fortnight ahead while deductions from wages commence in November. A new cost of living index threatening all wages almost ready. All this against a background of increasing attacks on work-shop conditions and more victimisation of the active trade unionists in the shops.

At the same time there has never been so much questioning and discussion among Trade Unionists. A remarkable growth of class consciousness is taking place. More and more arising among them is the demand for finding a way out of the present morass. Having this in mind it seems significant that the great organ in the Congress Hall should be swelling forth the strains of "Rule Britannia", as the delegates took their seats and the Congress opened under the Presidency of Mr. Holmes of the Agricultural Workers' Union.

The decisions of the Congress are a matter of history, but the very future of Trade Unionism is dependent on how quickly Trade Unionists can reverse them.

It is a sad fact, but, by the time this article appears, the Southport Congress will have been forgotten by British Trade Unionists.

That is its condemnation. The supreme tragedy is that this Congress, which should speak for and lead millions of organised workers, plays so little a part in the daily life and thought of those who constitute its rank and file. Such a fact is the main thing which concerns all who are serious-minded Trade Unionists.

After all, the decisions of Congress to tie the organised workers to Churchill's war chariot are serious enough in all conscience.

There is one point which needs considerable emphasis. Once the Trade Union leadership has succeeded in committing the Trade Unions to support for the war really serious obstacles arise in endeavouring to utilise the Unions as instruments for defending the workers' economic interests. So much was clearly demonstrated at Southport. Given you are for this

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war, you must be prepared to make sacrifices. This was the line of argument which was used to counter every delegate that dared to raise demands involving defence of the workers.

Take A.R.P.—whether on the question of working through raids under the spotter system, payment for time lost or proper shelter, either for the factory or for the civil population—the General Council had one stock answer: If we want to win the war we must make sacrifices, and these proposals will all impede the war effort.

There is no other explanation of the refusal of Congress to discuss wages, the Purchase Tax, the coming cost of living attack, the wage deductions, victimisation and attacks on workshop conditions, or a host of other things which ought to have been tackled by the supreme body of the British Trade Union Movement.

The main thing, therefore, that confronts all militant Trade Unionists is to realise, with the minimum delay, complete clarity on the character of the war and—what is vital—a means of uniting the increasing number of elements who achieve this clarity.

At the same time there are a whole series of burning class issues that are growing in character every day, and inevitably they will need to be faced and answered by the working class of Britain in the next months.

Take the issue of wages—with the steadily increasing cost of living which will be jumped up very much if the Government succeed in operating the Purchase Tax, announced in Parliament to start on October 21st. Wages have already become a major question in a whole number of industries.

A new menace has arisen in respect to wages and this may have taken more tangible shape before these lines are printed. I refer to the results of the Government Committee of inquiry into the cost of living index which has finished its work and will report at the end of October or in November.

The short report of Mr Hallsworth, T.U.C. representative on that Committee, which he made to the Southport Conference, did not tell the delegates much. But he did say, that as soon as the report was issued, the General Council would require to consider its attitude to the cost of living index as well as the Government policy on Price regulation and Food distribution.

If any worker among the 3,000,000 whose wages are regulated by the present cost of living index had an idea that the capitalists were prepared to allow even the present unsatisfactory agreements to continue unchallenged, he had better jettison that idea quickly. Naturally, this will affect all other workers and the obstacles being placed in the way of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, who have demanded 3*d.* per hour increase, are symptomatic of what the future holds.

In November, a large number of workers will get pay packets substantially lighter because of considerable deductions made under the new method of payment of income tax through weekly stoppages made by the employers. The bitter comment by those on the Clyde, in London, the Midlands and elsewhere who have received notice of the amount to be stopped is some measure of the unpopularity and injustice of the increased income tax and this dangerous new way of collecting it.

The demand for substantial increases in the basic rates of workers is receiving additional impetus from a new source. As a result of air raids, large numbers of piece-workers each week are losing considerable sums from

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their earnings through time lost. This applies even when the so-called spotter system is operated. It affects workers who have agreements for full payment of basic rates for time spent in shelters. Thousands of workers do not even have this agreement, and as the overwhelming bulk of workers are now on piece-work with low basic rates, the loss of wages is really serious all round. Raids are intensifying, consequently this loss will continue and increase. A number of factory committees are already voicing the demand for increases in the basic rate to meet this position.

Another matter which ought to be continually before the Trade Unions but is not being faced is Trade Union Unity. Amalgamations of the various unions were brought to the fore during the last war, partly as a consequence of the war. Some progress was made shortly after the war, but since then, and particularly to-day, very little. This question is arising again. Present conditions demand amalgamation among the various unions in the main industries. Let me give four outstanding examples. Engineering with its large number of craft unions, building where present conditions are urgently forcing the matter forward. In textiles, the Union organisation is chaotic. Rails is the fourth industry where the issue needs tackling. Finally, the present structure of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain is hopelessly behind the needs of the miners and inferior by far to the coalowners' organisation. So too on International Trade Union Unity which is connected with the foregoing point. In this regard it must be said what a fine thing Arthur Horner did, in hoisting the banner of International Trade Unionism at the Southport Congress because it never was more necessary. In a spirited and challenging speech he drew attention to the scandal that, in the desperate days through which the Movement was passing, not a word had been said at Congress about the position of the International Trade Union Movement, while the General Council report failed utterly to face up to this question. How true.

The rump of hangers-on to the numerous puppet Governments set up in Britain, which the General Council has gathered around it, is not, and never can be, representative of the International Trade Union Movement. Here the first job is to secure that the British Trade Unions should make approaches to the Soviet Trade Unions as a first step in the fight to re-establish a functioning International Trade Union Centre. The very character of the problems with which this war has confronted the Trade Unions demands a speedy and serious approach in the matter.

In addition to the whole question of A.R.P. which is becoming more acute as the days go past, there is arising increasingly the problem of Transfer of Labour. There are two main aspects at the moment. One is the increasing calls of the arms industry which, as new factories come into operation, makes further demands for Labour Power from certain areas where that Labour has operated in the past. The other feature is that bombings have created unemployment in some areas (such as London) and in a number of cases this is being solved by transfer. Coupled with this is the problem of certain industries—as for example, mining—where in districts like South Wales transfer of Labour is being considered as a solution to the difficulties created by loss of markets in France, etc.

Incidentally, it is Mr Ernest Bevin, member of the War Cabinet and Minister of Labour, who announces with the publication of this month's

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unemployment figure, showing an increase to 613,671, that the figures are misleading and in future the details of unemployment in the separate industries are to be suppressed.

The magnitude of the Labour Transference is not fully appreciated, nor yet its danger to the workers.

In many cases transfer means a reduction in wages for workers going to work on similar jobs. In the case of miners it may mean not only that, if the transfer takes place inside their industry. If, as is likely, the transfer is to another industry it means not only wage rates cut, but the whole question of conditions. This applies to all workers entering a new industry.

The other side of the question will be best made clear if I quote Mr Bevin's speech to the Trades Union Congress.

"This raises an enormous problem. This winter needs the thought and attention of every one of us. Thousands of women and men have been moved from their domestic circles and more will be moved into billets, and there is another enemy to be fought besides Hitler. This enemy is epidemic disease, colds, influenza. . . ."

"What is more vital we shall be calling upon more and more married women. In this connection I am pressing for the rapid extension of properly equipped day nurseries for the children. We came to an agreement last Friday, Mr. MacDonald, the Minister of Health and I, which will lead to a rapid extension of sick bays where they are necessary. This is essential, because those men and women who have been moved have lost all the advantages of domestic nursing—and the mother cures more children than the doctor. When you lose domestic nursing and proper attention you have to find something to take its place. . . ."

"It is pretty bad in some of these congested towns, and it is going to be worse when the new factories open and thousands of people are removed."

Obviously the whole Trade Union Movement is here faced with something which menaces its future unless speedy steps are taken to tackle it by ensuring no worsening of wage rates and conditions, and doing the utmost to safeguard the health of all who are involved.

Alongside these matters which are pressing ever more sharply against the workers has to be taken the fact of increasing victimisation and attacks on the shop stewards and militant workers in the factories. Recent reports indicate growing and successful resistance by workers in factories where victimisation has taken place.

The extent is not appreciated by many because there is only one daily newspaper prepared to print news of such attacks and it certainly does not get all of them. It is appropriate at this point to refer to the General Council's attack on the *Daily Worker*. Having decided for the war the Trade Union leadership not only refuses to protect trade unionists who are defending the workers' interests, it attacks them on the grounds that they are hindering the war effort. So it was with the *Daily Worker*. The General Council took the unprecedented step of refusing press facilities to the *Daily Worker* reporters with a full knowledge of all the implications in such an action. This paper has been the sole daily newspaper in Britain which has consistently exposed the kind of war this is, and at the same time expressed the workers' demands on all economic and social issues. This the Trade Union leadership are determined to try and prevent.

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These facts should be related to the growing integration of the Trade Union apparatus with the capitalist state machine and also the points made in last month's LABOUR MONTHLY by J. R. Campbell when he drew attention to the rôle of many subordinate Trade Union officials who have gone over and taken jobs in the State Services.

I mention this as preliminary to introducing something which, in my opinion, constitutes a most serious menace to the whole future of Trade Unionism in this country.

It is the tragic decline in Trade Union Branch life. From all over the country reports show this is a common feature.

As a matter of fact, one prominent craft Union in the building industry was in the position recently of having lost touch with more than 50 per cent of its London Branches. At least, it could get no response from them in relation to carrying through the ordinary but very important internal routine affairs of the Union.

It is true the problem has been aggravated by heavy air warfare. In some cases, meeting places have been bombed out of existence, branch records destroyed and in particular instances, branch secretaries and other officials killed. Again, Labour transference has intensified difficulties. Branch secretaries having gone, or having been sent to other jobs, try to cope with correspondence which follows them to the new place—and, adding to all the difficulties, the postal service is bad. The long hours in engineering and other trades has affected attendances, while in the heavily bombed areas like London, evening meetings are impossible. Nevertheless, when all these factors are stated and taken into account they do give the full picture of the catastrophic slump in branch life.

Basically, it represents loss of faith in the Trade Unions as effective instruments on behalf of the workers. True, and this is a very heartening sign, there is a great increase in workshop activity. A growing number of Shop Stewards are being appointed, and there is a healthy readiness to utilise the factory organisation in defence of conditions. Nevertheless, while the workshop is obviously the key point of organisation and every effort needs to be made to improve the position here, Trade Union branch life is also of outstanding importance.

Just consider the following: In a large number of unions voting will soon take place on the election of delegates to the next Annual or Biennial Conferences and for the next T.U.C.. In a number of cases elections for full-time officials come up and in key Unions like the A.E.U. election for District Committee delegates. In every case, these elections are carried on through the branch and you must attend the branch to register your vote. Most of the Unions are so constituted that to get support for workers in a particular factory or group of factories on any issue which arises, it is necessary to raise the matter in the first instance through the Branch.

These apparently elementary points need to be made in order to bring out this important fact, that if the unions are to reflect the real interests of the workers, then the branch life must be revived.

To-day Trades Councils are becoming vital centres for mobilising the whole of the organised workers in a town or area on a host of subjects.

Even at Southport, there was in Citrine's speech, a recognition of the importance of the Trades Councils. He referred to the fact that some Trade

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Unions did not like the Trades Councils butting in too much. Nevertheless, in time of war there were numerous communal problems dealing with food, etc., in which the Trades Council could play an important part, and this had to be recognised. Compare that statement with the General Council report where at least a score of Trades Councils were "proceeded against" or "re-organised". In practically every case these Trades Councils were most active in trying to do what a Trades Council should do in the present situation, i.e. become the rallying centre for the organised movement defending the workers' interests and voicing their demands.

More and more as the Government takes power away from the hands of the local authorities and rules by decrees, the Trades Councils tend to become the natural centre around which the people in a given locality can rally. History shows—the "Hands Off Russia" campaign, the 1926 General Strike, the Great Unemployment movements or the Spanish campaign—that they play a decisive part in the people's life.

Yet the Trades Council delegates are, in the main, drawn from T.U. Branches. How can they do their job if there is no life in the branches which those delegates represent?

The solution of this problem in the first instance is the responsibility of the militant workers in the factories. They have the task of finding ways and means of reviving Branch life. It can be done. Branch meeting times can be changed to suit new conditions.

Here I believe it is important to raise the question of time off work so that Trade Union branches can function. Take London or any other bombed area (and most big industrial centres are either bombed or await the threat of bombing). It is impossible to consider holding branch meetings when the bombs are dropping or when the streets are dangerous, as they are every night from dusk, owing to the barrage and falling shrapnel.

By allowing the workers two hours off during the day once a fortnight, it should be possible to hold meetings during the day time coinciding in some cases with the change of shift. This is something which every rank and file member will support and it ought to get the ready backing of all the officials who are concerned about maintaining the function of the branches under extraordinary war time conditions. Along with this, explanation of the function of the lower Trade Union organs will convince many good fighters in the factory of the need to utilise these bodies in furthering the interests of the men on the job. If the active workers are prepared to take on official positions in the branches, which in many cases at the moment are begging to be taken over, they can transform the branches. This in turn will also attract many of the best people from the workshop to play a part in reviving the branches. Such a revival is necessary now when progress is being made in building shop organisation. It can play a great part in stemming the present attacks on militants in the workshops. Above all it can be a means of transforming the whole outlook of the mass of active Trade Unionists on this war, and the other issues I have mentioned.

Here I would make a plea to the active comrades once again to consider the importance of literature. We are living in an extraordinary period where all are under constant strain. Ordinary meetings and the kind of discussion groups and classes which were possible in the past have to be carried through in the face of really great obstacles. But there is no insuperable obstacle in

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the way of literature distribution. What is being accomplished in distributing the daily and rank and file papers like the *New Propeller* in workshops proves this. Everywhere the same can also be done for pamphlets and the Revolutionary Classics, as is being done in tubes and factories in some parts of London at the moment. Attention to this now will be repaid a hundred-fold because never was there such avidity for information.

It is in the light of the foregoing we should view the People's Convention in January. *To me it seems that the development of the everyday fight of the workers is the most important preparation that can be made for the Conference.* In the process of doing this we will achieve much of the clarity at which the Convention aims.

In this way also, the Convention will become a real and burning thing to the workers in factories and Trade Union branches. It will guarantee deiegates from live organs of the T.U. movement, the Co-operatives, the Trades Councils and the factories.

It will achieve clarity on the war and ensure an effective fight not only for a Just Peace but on all the class issues facing us.

Never let us forget that the Trade Union movement of this country was formed out of the fight against capitalism. Every present experience shows the burning urgency of strengthening that fight. More than that, it demands of the Trade Union Movement that alongside the political organisation of the workers it will play its part in helping forward the struggle for power.

Nothing less is facing us in these testing days of the second Imperialist war. There can be nothing greater than the realisation of this aim.

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS:

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LONDON, N.3

(Nearest Underground Station: Finchley Central).
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Buy your LABOUR MONTHLY *centrally at:*
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COLLET'S, 66 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.2.
NEW BOOKS, 4 PARTON STREET, W.C.1
SMITHS BOOKSTALLS, etc., etc.

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India's Agrarian Revolution

BY MICHAEL CARRITT

AFTER ONE HUNDRED and eighty years, in which mountainous fortunes have been built up and huge profits extracted from India, British Imperialism today announces through the mouthpiece of an official Commission set up in Bengal its complete bankruptcy; it admits that for a century and a half it has pursued a policy that has inevitably led to increasing poverty and final disaster; admits that it has created and bolstered up a class of landlords that is an incubus on society; admits that

*if present conditions continue, it may not be too much to say that the system will break down of its own accord. . . . It has brought about a situation in the Province, in which the welfare of agriculture is neglected, and a great proportion of the wealth from the land is appropriated by middlemen, most of whom have no connection with agriculture and have treated the land simply as a commercial investment.**

The spectre of agrarian revolution haunts the minds of the imperialists. The system upon which they have relied for the prolonged enjoyment of the profits of colonial exploitation threatens to "*break down of its own accord*", or, maybe, under the hammer blows of the people's anger and distress. In a striking passage in his recent book, *India Today*, R. P. Dutt says:

Between the two opposing extremes of the imperialist exploiters at the apex of the pyramid and the destitute producing masses at the base, exist a host of transitional forms, intermediary parasitism, subordinate mechanisms of exploitation, old decomposing forces and new advancing forces. Through it all, extending every year, develop the rising national consciousness of the Indian people and the rising economic demands of the hungry Indian masses. This is a situation packed at every turn with social dynamite.

In the Floud Commission's report there is no Marxist analysis of the root cause of Indian poverty; no questioning of imperialist rule itself; no suggestion that the City of London is responsible for the lop-sided development of Indian economy, and, as a result, for the impoverishment of the masses. But in its detailed account of the existing land system and its social and economic effects, the Report confirms every word of Dutt's Marxist analysis and lays bare the seriousness of the crisis now affecting the Empire in India.

But without this Marxist analysis and understanding of the nature of imperialist rule, it is inevitable that the pitiful defeatism, characteristic of

* Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal (Chairman, Sir Francis Floud, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.), published by the Bengal Government Press. The Commission, set up two years ago, consisted of twelve members drawn (with the exception of the Chairman and two civil servants) from the political parties in Bengal.

In this article all the italicised portions are quotations from the Report. So far as is possible technical terms of land tenure, monetary and land measurements have been given in their English equivalent.—M.C.

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modern liberalism, should creep in. Thus we are told that the problem of poverty is well-night insoluble . . . for,

however we look at the problem of uneconomic holdings we are forced to return to the fundamental fact that there is not enough land to go round. There is now slightly less than one acre of cultivated land per head of the population. . . . It is the most difficult problem which we have to face because it is virtually impossible under present conditions to suggest any remedy for it.

Whether intentionally or not, it seems that the operative words in this helpless statement are "*under present conditions*".

These "*present conditions,*" of which no fundamental analysis is made in the official report, were dealt with in the greatest detail by the Communist International at its Sixth World Congress in 1928. It was shown that imperialism, so far from encouraging the development of colonial industry along independent lines, arrests the normal development of its subject peoples, maintaining their countries as agrarian, raw-material producing reserves. Such industry as is allowed to develop is only of a secondary nature and, because it is concentrated in the hands of British capitalists and subservient to their banking system, tends to accentuate the dependence of the colonial country upon the finance-capitalism of the "mother country".

Moreover, imperialism, whilst preserving for itself all the profits, everywhere keeps in existence the semi-feudal and pro-capitalist forms of exploitation in the villages and country areas as a political basis for the landlord and money-lending class which it uses as its trusted allies against the people. Thus the Indian people, some 75 per cent of whom are still dependent on agriculture for a living, suffer under a double yoke—out of the product of their labour an expensive imperialist machinery (and its profits) have to be paid for, whilst a parasitic class of landlords is licensed to batten upon them.

This background to the problem of Indian poverty, not unnaturally, is outside the scope of any official Commission.

The structure of agrarian society in Bengal is extremely complex and varied. The following simplification does not, however, falsify its general characteristics. At the top of the social hierarchy are the *Zemindars* or Big Landlords, most of them absentee landlords, Maharajas, Rajas and Nawabs, who pay revenue to the Government. Their obligations were fixed in perpetuity by the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 at £3 million. Not only the old chieftains and Rajas, but tax collectors and tax-farmers, were by this act given rights as proprietors of the soil at the expense of the peasant cultivators to whom previously "*the land belonged without dispute*". The intention of the authors of this Permanent Settlement was, it is generally believed, simultaneously to protect the tenants against exorbitant rent enhancements but "*their intention was defeated by the omission to make any definite provisions regarding customary right and pargana (district) rates*". This striking omission led to a situation which the Government itself in 1902 described as one in which the peasantry were "*rack-rented, impoverished and oppressed.*" For, from 1793 onwards, the landlords have progressively increased the rents they have collected from their tenants whilst their obligation to the State has remained fixed.

Beneath the Big Landlords are the Intermediary Landlords who have leased lands from them, not with the idea of themselves taking part in agriculture but

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in order to acquire a vested interest in the land as rent-receivers. This army of non-agricultural rent-receivers is increasing year by year; in the decade 1921 to 1931, it increased by 61 per cent. In many districts there are as many as 15 to 20 of these intermediary landlords between the Zemindar and the man who actually tills the soil; all of them live on the rent paid by the man at the bottom. This process, known as "subinfeudation" has had disastrous effects upon the economy of Bengal's agrarian life; it shifts

from one to another the responsibility of collecting rents. The system has prevented the landlords from fulfilling the functions which provide the economic justification for a landlord-tenant system. . . . The land is nobody's concern.

It is not too much to say that the extent of subinfeudation has become an incubus on the working agricultural population, which finds no justification in the performance of any material service so far as agricultural improvements are concerned.

In less than 150 years this army of landlords has succeeded in increasing the rents of the cultivating peasantry fourfold. Over and above these "legal" extortions is the vast sum annually exacted from the peasantry illegally and by means of intimidation. This practice is admitted by the Floud Commission "*to still represent an appreciable addition to the burdens of the cultivators.*" As so often in the history of British rule, legislation devised to protect the poor and the oppressed has a surprising way of "proving ineffective".

Beneath the various landlords are the Tenant Farmers, either cultivating their own small holdings or subletting them. Legislation devised to protect and encourage this class has, again, been abortive; their hereditary rights in land which the law seeks to maintain are rapidly passing into the hands of money-lenders and land-speculators. The rapid increase in the number of sharecroppers is, says the Commission's Report, "*an indication of the extent to which the hereditary raiyats (tenant farmers) are losing their status and being depressed to a lower standard of living*".

Beneath the Tenant Farmer again is the Sub-tenant, who, because he does not enjoy the same legal protection against rent-enhancement and eviction from his holding, is most cruelly exploited and rack-rented.

Free transferability of land has tended and must tend to facilitate the transfer of "occupied (i.e. hereditary) rights" into the hands of money-lenders and non-agriculturists, with the result that the number of rack-rented sharecroppers and subtenants is going up by leaps and bounds.

Finally, at the bottom rung of the ladder are the sharecroppers and landless labourers. The former, having no right in land, cultivate the fields of their masters and receive in return half of the crop. "*No one denies that half the produce is an excessive rent. . . . If the crop is even a partial failure, he does not earn the cost of cultivation*". Perhaps the most striking evidence of the chronic and deepening crisis of agriculture in Bengal is the rapid increase in the landless labourers. In the decade 1921 to 1931 their number increased by 34 per cent; a million peasants expropriated and thrown on to the scrap-heap by the money-lending and landlord class in the period of ten years. What the figures for the decade 1931 to 1941 will reveal (covering the worst years of the economic crisis) is a matter for speculation.

Such is the framework, firmly constructed and riveted together by Imperialism 150 years ago by the Permanent Settlement Act, within which destitution and poverty has grown to such proportions that even the Govern-

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ment is forced to set up a Commission of inquiry. Though by nature and climatically richer than any other of the Provinces, the rice yield per acre in Bengal is lower than elsewhere. The value of all crops per head of the agricultural population is found to be £3 per annum. "*The percentage of families holding* 2 *acres or less is* 41.9 *per cent, and percentage holding between* 2 *and* 4 *acres is* 20.6 *per cent.*" Since, in the opinion of the Commission 5 acres is the minimum economic holding for a family of five (or 8 acres in the West of Bengal), it is clear that from 60 per cent to 70 per cent, or perhaps more, are living in destitution. "*Those families whose land is insufficient for their maintenance, cannot pay rent unless they can make sufficient income from other sources. It makes little difference if the rent of such holdings is high or low*". With such supreme indifference the problem of uneconomic holdings and mass destitution is dismissed.

With this picture before them the majority of the members of the Commission find that landlordism in Bengal no longer serves a useful purpose.

It is no longer suitable to the conditions of the present time . . . it has developed so many defects that it has ceased to serve any national interest . . . the present system should be replaced by one which will bring the actual cultivators into the position of tenants holding directly under the Government.

The landlords are to be expropriated; "fair" and uniform rents fixed; and sharecroppers to be admitted, as soon as possible, to the status of cash-paying tenants directly under the Government like other cultivators.

So, after a century and a half of complacent support for, and patronage of, the oppressive class of Bengal Landlords, a Government Commission, presided over by a retired High Commissioner of Canada, admits the rottenness of the whole social structure on which Imperialism rests.

But the old allies of Imperialism, "the host of subordinate mechanisms of exploitation", are not to be thrown on to the dust heap unregarded. The recommendation to expropriate them is accompanied by a promise of handsome compensation. Pensioned off, these go-betweens of exploitation are promised a new sphere of parasitism. They are offered ten, twelve or fifteen years value of their interest in land (the sharks are unable to agree upon their price), thus involving the State with an additional financial burden of from £100 million to £137 million. This debt, incurred to keep in idleness a class that had no social function, would inevitably call for increased taxation of the people. The Commission, perhaps with this fact in mind, is careful to record that "*there would be justification for enhancements rather than reductions of rent in Bengal*". This, let it be noted, in spite of the fact that some 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the population is admitted to be in destitution.

Generous as the terms of compensation are, the voice of the landlords is lifted in protest. Two of them, members of the Commission, have recorded a note of dissent from the Commission's majority findings. They deplore the unsympathetic treatment meted out to their long-suffering class. They ask, are 150 years of loyalty to British rule to be rewarded thus? They draw attention to that significant passage in the India Act of 1935 which, with the intention of protecting all vested interests from democratic control, specifically mentions the necessity of shielding the Bengal landlords from the danger of "economic revolution". They threaten to appeal to the Viceroy for protection as a minority which "*whether on account of the smallness of its*

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number or its lack of education (sic) . . . *cannot as yet fully rely on joint political action in the legislature to resist oppression*". With solemn words they warn that the "*abolition of landlords will mean the disintegration of social classes . . . will mean encouraging socialism and communism of a kind which is not salutary for the Province.*"

Poor persecuted and oppressed landlords, they disguise their anxiety for their own vested interests in expressions of anxiety for the future stability of the country. They, as always, identify their own interests with those of the country as a whole. They excuse their own rapaciousness by quoting economic authorities (unnamed) to prove that high rents ensure efficient farming. They have no solution to offer for the problems whose existence they cannot deny; and in order to maintain the old basis of exploitation, they suggest that it is the "*human unit*" that must be improved. By that they mean that the cultivator must be taught to employ greater skill, more industry, to have a clearer vision, better judgment, more self-control in his habits, more faithfulness to his landlord and greater frugality. Such is the sermon preached by one of the most dissolute and pampered classes in history to those whose blood they have sucked for 150 years.

A note of dissent has also been written by the two British civil servants on the Commission. Trained for service in a bureaucracy which considers it the highest merit to retain the status quo, they run true to type in elaborating the obstacles to reform. The Congress representative, remarkably enough, declares in a note of dissent that he has no mandate from the Congress Party to recommend the abolition of landlordism; he fears that it would amount to a "*revolution in the social and economic structure of the Province.*"

It would be a mistake to imagine that the recommendations of the Floud Commission, in so far as it advocates drastic social changes, will stand any chance of being accepted by the Government. The babel of dissentient voices will supply the desired occasion for their rejection or emasculation, as is the custom with the reports of Commissions. For, from the point of view of the Government of Bengal the two years labour of the Commission will not have been wasted. The main purpose in setting it up was to gain time, to cause a period of delay in which the Premier, Mr Fazlul Huq, could escape from the angry demands of his followers that he should give effect to his election pledges. For having come into office at the head of the majority party in the 1937 elections, Mr Huq saw fit to form a coalition with the most reactionary landlords and imperialists in Bengal after having fought on a radical, even revolutionary, platform for the abolition of all landlordism and the winning of freedom for India from British rule. His betrayal has split the party which he led and, whilst winning him the support of the Imperialists, has finally discredited him with the masses.

Whilst Imperialism falteringly admits its bankruptcy and the landlords haggle over the price of their expropriation, one voice alone speaks clearly and claims the ability to solve the crisis of the Indian people. This is the voice of the man in the fields, the man who tills the land but may not enjoy the fruit of his labour. With lofty contempt for the real significance of the mass movements that are sweeping across India to-day, the Commission grumbles that "*the situation is complicated by the development in certain areas of a no-rent mentality which threatens the stability and the security of the land system as a whole.*" Yes, it threatens the stability of the present land

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system; those million and more organised peasants threaten also the stability of Imperialism "*as a whole*", threaten to solve the problem of poverty in a far more drastic and final manner than ever the professional politicians of Imperialism or their painstaking Commissions dream to be possible. For they threaten to carry through, in the not-so-far-distant future, the very social revolution which the Commission in spite of its admission of Imperialist bankruptcy, seeks to avert.

DOCUMENT OF THE MONTH

The People's Convention

The following call for the People's Convention to be held on January 12, 1941, *for a People's Government has been issued by the National Committee, People's Convention,* 63 *Napier House,* 24 *High Holborn, London, W.C.*1.

A CALL to all working men and women; Socialists, trade unionists and Co-operators; professional and intellectual workers, small shop-keepers, small business-men and farmers; democrats and anti-Fascists; in short, to all workers by hand and brain.

In these eventful days the whole future of our people is being decided. The full horrors of war are let loose on the peoples of Britain, Germany and other countries, and millions are looking into the future with anxious concern. Our rulers have proved themselves bankrupt of constructive thought or action. The time has come for the people to unite in defence of their interests.

The present Government is a Government of the rich and the privileged, ruling the country in their own interests and against those of the masses of the people.

Behind it are the ruling class, the Tory machine, the men of Munich, the friends of Fascism, whose policy built up the power of Hitler, brought the nation into war, and is diretcly responsible for the unpreparedness which has sacrificed scores of thousands of lives.

* * * *

While the rich enjoy comfort and even luxury in safe shelters, this Government with cynical disregard of the needs of the people, persistently neglects the most essential measures of air-raid protection for the masses and makes no adequate provision for relieving and rehousing the victims of aerial bombardments.

It protects the most shameless war profiteering, and seeks to place all the burdens of the war on the backs of the masses of the people. Rising prices, crushing taxation and food restrictions bear heavily on all, sections of the people. Unemployment and short time in many industries accompany overtime and speed-up in others.

Small traders and farmers are brought to hardship and even ruin through the control of industry by "Big Business" and the extension of control in agriculture.

The Government refuses the just demand of the armed forces and their dependants for adequate pay and allowances.

It directs its attacks against our hardly won democratic liberties, and our trade union rights, conditions, and practices, the only weapon we have for our long struggle against the ruling class and its system.

This same Government refuses the demand of the Indian people for national freedom and will not recognise the freedom of all peoples, including colonial peoples, to determine their own destiny. Its attitude to the Soviet Union is one of scarcely-concealed hostility.

* * * *

This Government stands rooted in the profit system. It is dominated by the Tory machine. It represents those natural enemies of the mass of the people, the interests of big business and reaction. Such a Government can never defend the people.

The interests of the people must override the interests of those who prey on the people.

This Government, which represents the interests of profits must go.

In this hour of crisis, threatened by limitless danger and hardships, the people must make their will felt. The present Parliament, elected five years ago under entirely different conditions, is reactionary and unrepresentative. The formation of a coalition Government has wiped out the normal functioning of a Parliamentary Opposition.

The work of the Labour Movement is

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paralysed because the leadership of the Labour Party is tied up with the Government, and in place of leading the opposition to it, shares the responsibility for the present evils. Vital issues, affecting the lives and deaths of millions, will continue to be decided in secret over the heads of the people, if the people do not make their will prevail.

The people must unite in order to make their will felt.

* * * *

As a step to the victory of the people's demands and the assertion of their power, their delegates must meet together in a Great People's Convention.

Following on conferences all over the country, and in accordance with the declared will of those conferences, we, the undersigned, representing the most varied sections of the people, have united to call a People's Convention, to be held on January 12, 1941, which will be at once the climax of months of preparatory work and the prelude of a further mighty campaign,

In accordance with the views expressed at the London Conference on July 7, 1940, called by the Hammersmith Trades Council and Labour Party and a committee of leading trade union and Labour representatives, as well as at conferences and mass meetings in other parts of the country we propose, as the basis on which the Convention is called and in preparation for the full platform which will be decided by the Convention, the following Six Points:—

(1) *Defence of the people's living standards.*

(2) *Defence of the people's democratic and trade union rights.*

(3) *Adequate air raid precautions, deep bomb-proof shelters, rehousing and relief of victims.*

(4) *Friendship with the Soviet Union.*

(5) *A People's Government, truly representative of the whole people and able to inspire the confidence of the working people of the world.*

(6) *A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war.*

* * * *

We call on all sections of the people in all parts of the country, to begin immediately to elect delegates for this People's Convention, to raise finances for the expenses of the delegates and of the Convention, and to set up organising committees for the Convention in all districts.

We call on all working-class organisations, trades councils, trade union branches, lodges, district committees and executives, Co-operative and Labour organisations, women's organisations, workmen's clubs, tenants' associations, and unemployed organisations, to elect delegates.

We call on all progressive and democratic organisations, professional associations, small traders' and farmers' organisations, sport and youth movements, and educational and cultural organisations to elect delegates.

We call on all working people in the factories, mines, shops and offices, in every place of work, in every town and village, to meet to elect delegates.

The People's Convention must be the greatest landmark in the history of this country, and must lead the people from the present menacing situation to peace and freedom.

Let the people have confidence in their strength. They alone can save themselves, their country and the world.

This call for the People's Convention is signed by over 500 *people from all parts of the country. A representative selection is given below, indicating the widespread nature of the support for the convention.*

The names of organisations are given as a matter of information. Signatures are appended in a personal capacity.

LONDON

HARRY ADAMS (*London Organiser, Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers*); PERCY ALLOTT (*London Secretary, Shop Assistants' Union*); CLLR. P. ANDREWS (*N. Hammersmith*); MRS. MAUDE ATKINS (*Member Management Board, Watford Co-op. Society*); R. PAGE ARNOT; F. ARTER (*London District Committee, A.E.U.*); CLLR. A. E. AUSTIN, B.A. (*Battersea B.C.*); A. G. AUSTIN (*Nat. E.C. Member National Society of Painters*); S. G. BAKER (*President, Guildford and District Co-op. Society*); JAMES F. BANNISTER (*T. & G.W.U., Welling, Kent*); M. BARNES (*Member London Management Committee N.A.F.T.A.*); DR. BARTON (*Parliamentary Candidate, Sth. Croydon*); CLLR. MISS MARGARET BARRY; E. BATTEN (*National Farmers' Union, Cowden*); GEORGE FREDK. BECK (*Garage Representative, Merton* 1/575 *Branch Transport & General Workers' Union*); CLLR. LEW BEDFORD (*Walthamstow*); W. BENSON (*E. T. U. London Area Official*); MICHAEL BEST (*Gen. Secretary, Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association*); W. BIRD, C.C. (*Chairman, Walthamstow Trades Council*); MRS. ELSY BORDERS (*Federation of Tenants' and Residents'*

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BOOK REVIEW

Imperialism and Counter-Revolution

The Traitor Class by Ivor Montagu. (Lawrence & Wishart, 2*s*.)

The Traitor Class has already had a wide sale because of its popular exposure of the corruption and inefficiency of the ruling class. Built up on quotations, aptly selected and woven together, the book has a very convincing appeal and vigorously attacks the legend that this is an anti-Fascist war.

Ivor Montagu has exposed the rottenness and treachery of the ruling class with great vigour and he deals many shrewd blows. But in his enthusiasm for this popular exposure, the author has not paid sufficient attention to the clear formulation of his political conclusions.

Certainly, the main lesson drawn is the necessity of the fight for the People's Government and in the final chapter quotations are given from the June manifesto of the C.P.G.B. and from Billoux's challenging reference to Communism before the Paris Military Tribunal. But some of the political conclusions are formulated in a way that may cause misunderstanding or even confusion.

The conception "traitor class" is clearly open to misinterpretation. As a popular title it has an obvious appeal, but it can also convey the meaning that the ruling class are acting as traitors instead of carrying on a real People's War against Fascism.

In view of this possible misconception, the author might well have included a basic analysis of the war and have departed somewhat from the literary method of building up his case on quotations plus brief political generalisations.

The absence of any such treatment and the presence of various unclear and even wrong generalisations on current political events, means that, in spite of many good things, the book as a whole may not help to dispel the illusions of certain readers regarding the character of the war.

The keynote to the book is the italicised sentence in the introductory note—"*There is a whole class in it*". In other parts we find political generalisations which strike a similar note.

"Petty and trivial, however, are these activities (B.U.F., etc.) compared with the assistance, not of the deliberate agents of the enemy, but of those whose class background determines assistance to German imperialism. The Fifth Column because they cannot help it, because their class interest prevents them from acting in any other fashion." (Page 34.)

"Hitler has his Fifth Column within every capitalist country, the ruling class who, to preserve their privilege, would imitate his régime or surrender to it. But the ruling class in Britain has no Fifth Column in Fascist countries, because the only class resolute to fight Fascism and overthrow the Fascist rulers is the revolutionary working class and this, to the ruling class in Britain, is a greater enemy than Hitler." (Page 132.)

These paragraphs are not written in a precise Marxist language, but they obviously mean that the British bourgeoisie are the agents of the German bourgeoisie. They are made regardless of the desperate and bloody struggle now developing throughout the world between the rival imperialist blocs. Even the man in the street who knows from the newspapers that the world is sinking deeper into war will not accept such conclusions.

To draw attention to the counter-revolutionary strivings of the bourgeoisie of all countries and their desire to come to an agreement directed against the Soviet Union, is a very necessary task, but care must be taken not to replace the Leninist analysis of the unequal development of imperialism by hazy formulations about the Fifth Column. Such one-sided treatment can definitely be misleading.

It is clear that one source of these errors is the mechanical transference of the lessons of France to the different situation prevailing in Britain, and a simplification of the French collapse, which is treated as Fifth Column treachery quite apart from

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the position of France within the imperialist world system.

"Taken as a whole, or in detail. the record of the rulers runs exactly parallel with that of those in France and could not have assumed any other form had it been the record of deliberate, employed Nazi agents." (Page 60.)

"Precisely the same corruption, complacency and incompetence reigned in military and supply matters, in Britain as in France, in the opening phases of the war as before the war." (Page 35.)

"Throughout the period of these disasters, the same class policy of appeasement to Fascism and reaction and of hostility to the opponents of Fascism persisted, during the war as before the war." (Page 37.)

These quotations quite obviously date, and it may be argued that they are justified in relation to the earlier stages of the war, when the carry-over of the pre-war appeasement policy was still strongly marked. Even so, it is fundamentally incorrect to content that the same policy continued "during the war as before the war". The war marked a turning point in international relationships, as a result of which the division of states into Fascist and "democratic" lost its former sense and the rival imperialisms entered the path of open conflict in the struggle for world domination.

In the first stages of the war, the results of the former appeasement policy were clearly to be seen in the military unpreparedness of Britain and France and the corruption and incompetence which is an outstanding characteristic of these satiated imperialisms. Examples of this should be widely utilised for agitational purposes as is done in *The Traitor Class*, and the emphasis will vary according to the given political situation and the stage of the mass movement. Thus at the time of the Men of Munich campaign the agitation largely took the form of an exposure of corruption, incompetence and the results of appeasement, although the positive aim of the People's Government was also strongly brought out by the Communist Party.

But the general line of revolutionary policy in this period must be based on the new international situation ushered in by the war and on a concrete analysis of the role of each imperialist power. It is, for example, misleading to state that the record of the British rulers runs exactly parallel with that of those in France. As the representative of the subordinate imperialism the French ruling class were compelled to adapt their policy to the interests of Britain, which meant, however, that they had to bear the brunt of the war and suffered military defeat. Caught between the two stronger imperialisms, the French ruling class had to submit to one or the other. They chose Vichy in preference to the Act of Union.

This change in the balance of forces resulted in the development of the Anglo-American Alliance and the counter move of the Axis shown in the conclusion of the pact with Japan. But *The Traitor Class* was not written with this perspective of the extension of the war in mind.

This criticism is in no way intended to detract from the positive merits of a book which is serving a valuable purpose, it is made solely in order to clear up certain questions regarding the character of the war and its likely development, and to emphasise that the British Workers have the task of fighting against their own ruling class, who are struggling for world domination, and the continuation of colonial enslavement, and who are utilising the war in order to establish their own reactionary dictatorship at home.

Never was it more necessary that these basic ideas regarding the tasks of the working class in the fight against imperialist war should find simple and popular expression. Never was it more necessary to imbue the people with the conviction that they can bring the bloodshed and horror to an end by taking power into their own hands. Never was it more necessary to show that through this struggle of the people in the various countries will emerge the international solidarity of the people, the only possible basis for a lasting and just peace.

WILLIAM RUST

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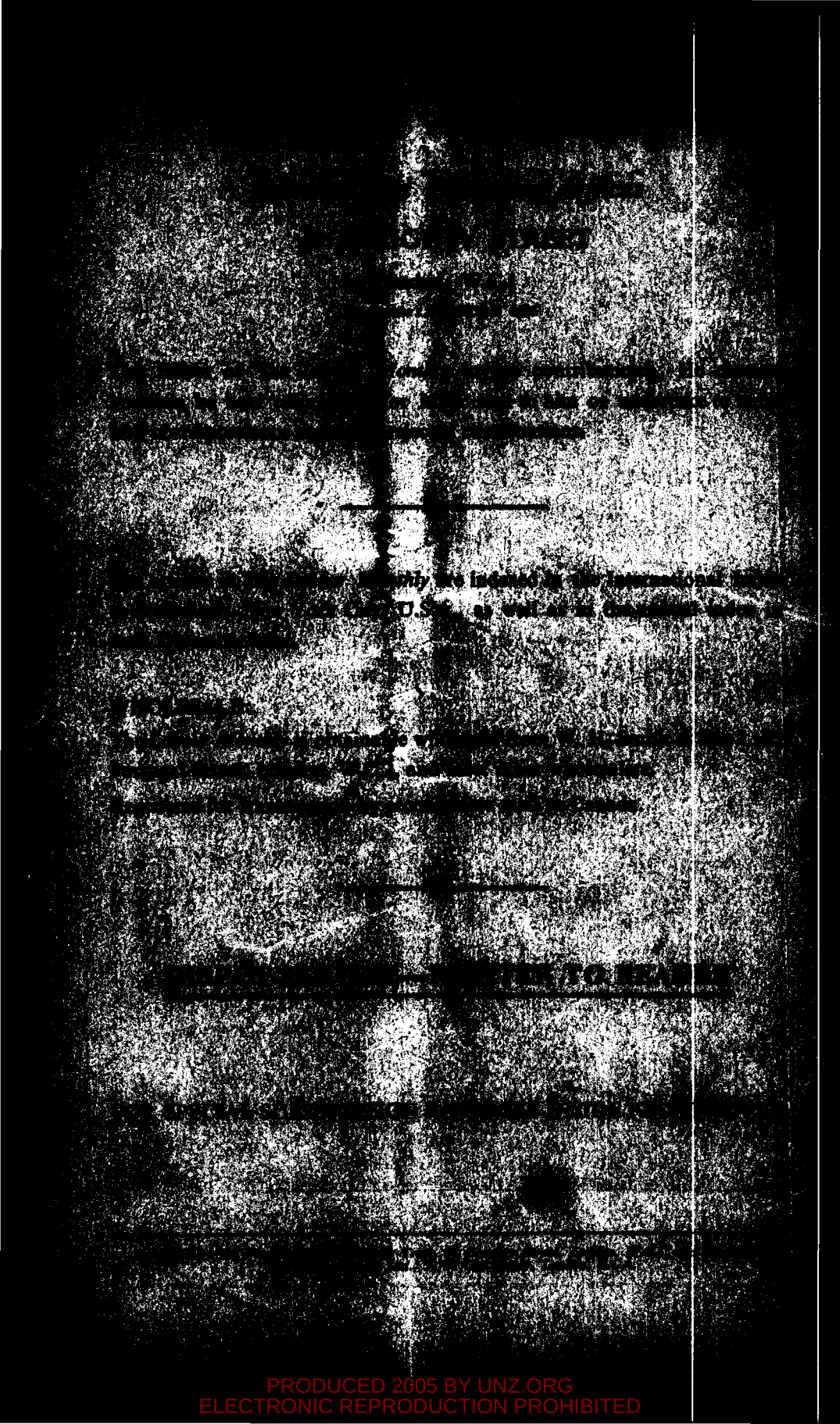

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